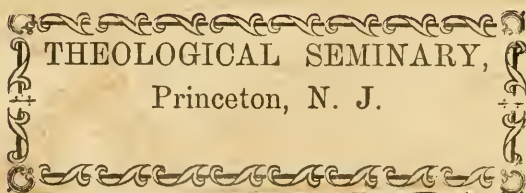




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MR. ARCHIBALD M'LEAN,
LATE
PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH,
EDINBURGH.



WITH A
MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, MINISTRY, AND WRITINGS,
BY WILLIAM JONES.



IN SIX VOLUMES.



VOL. IV.



LONDON:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM JONES, LOVELL'S COURT,
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1823.

WORKS
OF
ARCHIBALD M'LEAN.

VOL. IV.

DISCOURSES ON VARIOUS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

DISCOURSES.

T. Harjette, Printer, 29, Bedford Street,
Covent Garden.

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

BY ARCHIBALD M'LEAN,

One of the Pastors of the Baptist Church, Edinburgh.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM JONES, LOVELL'S COURT,
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1823.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT may be proper to apprise the public, that, of this volume of Discourses, the first nine of them appeared about twenty years ago in a small volume, which formed part of the author's WORKS printed during his life time. These are now reprinted without any other alteration than that of dividing the first, second, third and sixth, each into two parts, a measure suggested by the extraordinary length of those discourses, and by which all of them are made to bear a nearer proportion of reading to each other.

Of the seven other Discourses, which are now added for the sake of producing a sizeable volume in octavo, the publisher finds it incumbent upon him to enter into some explanation. That they are, with the exception of a few paragraphs, the genuine compositions of the author, will be obvious, from internal evidence, to all who are conversant with his other writings. Some of them were written out in a fair copy with his own hand, apparently with a view to publication at some future period, had he lived to accomplish it ; and

these therefore need no apology—they will speak for themselves. Of one or two others which were left in a more imperfect state, the Editor can only express his regret, that they have not received the finishing touch of their author's unrivalled pen. He is disposed to hope, nevertheless, that in their present form they will not be considered as reflecting any discredit upon the memory of a man, whose singularly enlightened mind, discriminating judgment, and happy talent for illustrating divine truth and pressing it home upon the conscience and the heart, must permanently embalm it in the church of God.

In selecting for publication the additional Discourses the Editor has studiously had an eye to practical subjects, aiming thereby to render the contents of the volume more miscellaneous. In its present form, it will be found to comprise such an extraordinary range of sentiment, that it will not be easy to pitch upon a doctrine in all the Christian System, that is not introduced into it, and which by the magic of his pen is not placed in the most luminous point of view—in the noon-tide blaze of the New Testament.

W. J.

London, Feb. 8, 1823.



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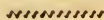
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SERMON I.

THE BELIEF OF THE GOSPEL SAVING FAITH.



MARK xvi. 15, 16.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

THESE words contain part of our Lord's last charge to his apostles, when he was just about to leave them and ascend to his Father. The work he assigns them is to "preach the gospel;" i. e. to proclaim abroad the glad tidings of salvation through his death and resurrection. They were to "go into all the world," and publish it universally "to every creature," and not confine it to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, as formerly. But though he enjoins them to declare the gospel to all mankind without exception, yet he evidently restricts the promise of salvation to him that believeth: "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Since therefore believing is absolutely necessary to salvation, it must be of the utmost consequence, as well to our safety as comfort, to know both what we are to believe, and what our Lord means by believing. As there are few points about which professing Christians

are more divided, and as uncertainty in matters of such importance must be very perplexing and distressing to all who have any proper concern about their salvation, I shall

I. Give a view of the nature of faith or belief in general; and take notice of some mistakes on this subject.

II. Shew what that faith is in particular to which the promise of salvation is made. And,

III. Prove that it is the indispensable duty of all who hear the gospel.

I. I am to give a view of the nature of faith or belief in general. In entering upon this, it will be necessary to observe, that the word *faith* is sometimes used in scripture in a metonymical sense. In Rom. iii. 3. it is put for the truth or faithfulness of God to his promise; and in Gal. v. 22. it signifies faithfulness or fidelity in men. Thus faith is put for that quality in the object which is the ground of it. The gospel itself is frequently termed *the faith*. See Acts vi. 7. chap. xxiv. 24. Gal. i. 23. Philip. i. 27. Jude, ver. 3. Rev. ii. 13. because it is that which men are called to believe, even as hope is put for the object of hope, Rom. viii. 24.; and it is common enough at this day to call the articles of a man's faith his *belief*, or *creed*.

But neither our text, nor the greater part of the passages where this word occurs, will admit of either of the forementioned senses. Faith or belief, in the common and ordinary acceptation of the word, is that credit which we give to the truth of any thing which is reported, testified, promised, or threatened, and is grounded either on the veracity of the speaker, or on the proofs

and evidence by which his words are confirmed. When we are convinced that what a man says is true, or when it stands as a truth in our minds, then we are said to have faith in him, or to believe his word.

Some have asserted, that "*faith* and *belief*" are two very different principles." Yet all who can read the English New Testament, may easily see, that these words are used indifferently as convertible terms, which signify one and the same thing; compare Mark xi. 22. with ver. 23, 24. and Rom. iv. 3. with ver. 5. and chap. x. 14, 16. with ver. 17. Gal. ii. 16.; and such as have the smallest acquaintance with the original, must know that these two English words have but one answering to them in Greek, *viz.* (πιστις) *pistis*, which comes of the verb (πειθω) *peitho*, to persuade or convince; so that there is not the least foundation for this alleged difference.

Many affirm, that the apostles used the word faith or belief, when connected with salvation, in a sense very different from that which it bears in common discourse. But if this is the case, how shall we find out its true meaning with any certainty? Is it by consulting the numerous definitions given of it in modern religious books? Alas! these are so various, contradictory, and many of them so perplexed and unintelligible, that they only increase the difficulty; for when men, without necessity, depart from that fixed sense in which the word is universally understood in other cases, a door is opened upon this subject for every whim that may chance to arise in their brain, wherein they can never be supposed to agree among themselves. The apostles used great plainness of speech, as was suitable to the ends of their mission; and, therefore, we cannot reasonably admit, that, in a matter of such importance, they would use a term in one sense which they knew was universally under-

stood in another, without, at least, carefully explaining, upon every occasion, the new idea they had affixed to it, in order to prevent mistakes. Yet we do not find them dealing much in definitions of faith or belief, but in general using the term in such a manner as if they supposed it well understood; neither do we ever find any asking them what they meant by it. We cannot account for this but upon the supposition, that their hearers understood them as using that term in its common and usual acceptance; and that they themselves meant so to be understood.

The general nature of faith or belief must ever be the same, whatever difference there may be in its degrees, objects, or effects. It may be weak or strong, according to the degrees of perceived evidence; it may have God or men, things heavenly or earthly, for its objects; it may produce different effects upon the heart and life, according to the different natures or qualities of these objects; but the nature of faith or belief itself is still the same in all cases. The belief of God's testimony may be termed *divine faith*, and the belief of men's testimony, *human faith*; but the former is illustrated by the latter, as being of the same general nature; "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," 1 John v. 9. We know that to receive the witness of men, is to believe them to be faithful and true in what they testify; and there is no other way of receiving the divine testimony; for "he that hath received his" Christ's "testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. There is indeed a wide difference in the objects: in the former case we believe men; in the latter, God; and as the witness of God is greater than that of men, so it ought to be received with the highest degree of faith, because it is impossible with God either to be deceived himself, or to deceive his

creatures; but still the highest degree of faith is nothing more than belief.

The only formal definition of faith which we have in the word of God, is in these words: "Now faith is the *ἰποστασις* confidence* of things hoped for, the *ελεγχος* conviction† of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. This definition is not only plain and rational, but agrees exactly with all that the scripture says on the subject. Here the nature of faith is expressed by the two words *confidence* and *conviction*, and its objects are *things hoped for, things not seen*. Things hoped for must be future good things, otherwise they could not be the objects of hope; and they must also be things revealed and promised, otherwise they could neither be the objects of faith nor hope. Now the *confidence* that is in faith, as distinguished from hope, is evidently a *confidence of persuasion*, founded on God's power and faith-

* The word *ἰποστασις*, which our translators render *substance*, is frequently used by the LXX. to express *confidence*, or *confidence of expectation*, as in Ruth i. 12. Ps. xxxix. 7. Ezek. xix. 5. It occurs only five times in the New Testament, in three of which it is translated *confidence*, as in 2 Cor. ix. 4. ch. xi. 17. Heb. iii. 14.; and I can see no reason why it should be otherwise rendered here in a definition of faith. Indeed the translators themselves seem to have been sensible of this, and have translated it *confidence* in the margin.

† The word *ελεγχος*, which they have translated *evidence*, is never so rendered any where else in the New Testament. It is translated *reproof*, in 2 Tim. iii. 16. but then it signifies such reproof as produceth *conviction* in the mind, and so its verb *ελεγχω* is rendered *convince*, as in John viii. 9. Acts xviii. 28. 1 Cor. xiv. 24. Tit. i. 9. James ii. 9. Jude, ver. 15. as it ought also to be in John xvi. 8. Though the word also signifies the *evidence*, *proof*, or *argument*, which produceth conviction, yet, in a definition of faith or belief, it must signify evidence as existing in the mind in a way of conviction. Besides, the words *ἰποστασις* and *ελεγχος* are sufficiently explained by a variety of synonymous expressions in the illustration of this definition of faith through the succeeding part of the chapter, all which are expressive of the confident persuasion and conviction of the mind. See ver. 6, 11 13, 19, &c.

fulness, that the good things he hath promised are realities, and shall be accomplished, or conferred, according to the tenor of the promise; and so this *confidence* is explained to be a *judging him faithful* who hath promised, Heb. xi. 11.—a *persuasion* of the promises, ver. 13. *i. e.* of the truth of them—a *full persuasion* that what God hath promised, he is *able also to perform*, Rom. iv. 21. Again, faith is here defined *the conviction of things not seen*. Things not seen are more comprehensive than things hoped for. They include not only things promised, but things testified, John iii. 33. 2 Thess. i. 10.; not only good things to be hoped for, but evil things to be dreaded, Heb. xi. 7.; not merely future things, but also things past and present, ver. 3, 6. It is, however, common to them all, that they are things not seen; for it is only unseen things that can properly be the objects of faith, and hence *faith* is opposed to *sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. 1 Pet. i. 8. Though faith cometh by the ear in hearing the word of God, Rom. x. 17. and also by the eye in reading it, Acts xvii. 11, 12.; yet the truths or objects presented to the mind by these means are still things not seen, and as such only are they the objects of faith, or fall properly within its province. Things which we know by nature, reason, or experience, without revelation, are not the proper objects of faith. Divine faith respects divine revelation, and is a conviction of the truth of whatever God is pleased to reveal. Though the supernatural truths of revealed religion could not be discovered by our reason, yet when we perceive them to be a revelation from God, nothing can be more reasonable than to believe them; because his nature and perfections afford the highest evidence of their truth, and reason must necessarily assume it as a first principle, that it is impossible with

God to lie. The *conviction* that is in faith, therefore, is not a blind enthusiastical fancy, or the effect of weak credulity, but a conviction founded upon the most rational evidence. Thus we may see how faith and reason harmonize.

Many confound faith with its effects, and strenuously maintain, that it is something more than belief; some motions or actings of the will and affections; and when we attend to all they have to say on this subject, we shall find, so far as they speak intelligibly, that they include in its very nature every good disposition and affection of the heart. It is freely granted, that when a man really believes, his mind will be affected with the objects of his belief, according to the perception he has of their nature and qualities, or the concern he has in them. If what he believes appear to him evil, disagreeable, or hurtful, it will excite his hatred, aversion, or fear; but if it appear to him excellent, amiable, or beneficial, it will draw forth his esteem, love, desire, hope, or joy. But these dispositions, passions, and affections, evidently suppose the previous perception and belief of what excites them, and so are not faith itself, but its effects. Though faith is the confidence of *things hoped for*, and also worketh by *love*; yet it is neither hope nor love, for the apostle distinguishes it from both; “And now abideth faith, hope, love—these THREE,” 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Noah, by faith in God’s warning respecting the deluge, was moved with *fear* to prepare the ark, Heb. xi. 7.; yet this fear was not faith, but the effect of it. I may add, that faith wrought with Abraham’s works, and *by works was faith made perfect*, James ii. 22.; yet his faith was not works, either in whole or in part; but is always distinguished from, and, on the point of justification, is constantly opposed to all works of any kind, Rom. iii. 28. ch. iv. 4, 5.

In order to shew that faith is something more than belief, a number of absurd distinctions have been made use of upon this subject. Many distinguish the *belief of the head* from the *belief of the heart*, as if a man could perceive a thing to be true with his head, whilst in his heart he holds it to be false. If they mean by this to distinguish faith from love, the terms are improper, for love is not *belief*, but an *affection* of the heart; nor is it from the *belief of the head*, but from the *confession of the mouth*, that the apostle distinguisheth the belief of the heart, Rom. x. 9, 10. It is common to distinguish *true faith* from a *historical faith*, as if there could be any true faith without believing the gospel history. The gospels written by the four Evangelists contain the history of Christ's incarnation, life, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension; and one of the Evangelists tells us the design of this history: "These are written that ye might BELIEVE that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have LIFE through his name," John xx. 31. Surely that belief which has life connected with it must be true faith. A distinction is also made between *believing the doctrine of the gospel*, and *receiving the person of Christ*, as if Christ's person was not the subject of the gospel doctrine, or as if we could receive Christ in any other way than by believing that doctrine. John says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," which receiving he explains in the following words, "even to them that BELIEVE on his name," John i. 12.; for another apostle says, "Ye are all the children of God by FAITH in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 26. And it is plain, that to *receive* him, or *believe* on his name, is to believe the doctrine of the gospel concerning him; for "he that abideth

in the doctrine of Christ, "he hath both the Father and the Son," 2 John, ver. 9. The same thing, I apprehend, is meant by the distinction which they make between *believing the Son*, and *believing in, or on him*. The former phrase, they imagine, does not fully express true faith, but the latter always does. But this is a mistake. To *believe the Son* is to "receive his testimony, and to set to our seal that God is true," John iii. 33. which is certainly true faith. *Believing in or on him* is sometimes expressive of an essentially defective and temporary faith; so it is said, that "many believed IN his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men," John ii. 23, 24. Again it is said, "As he spake these words, many believed ON him. Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed ON him," &c. chap. viii. 30, 31. Yet from what follows, it appears that they were insensible of their bondage to sin, and ignorant of the truth which maketh free, ver. 32, 33. I admit, that to believe the apostles is not the same thing as to believe ON them, because the apostles did not preach themselves; but as Christ is the subject of his own testimony, it is easy to see, that, to believe him, and to believe ON him, are expressions of the same import; and, accordingly, they are used indifferently as to him: "He that believeth ON the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life," John iii. 36.

Some describe faith to be "an inward principle of grace implanted in the heart by the operation of the Spirit, separate from, and previous to, the knowledge of the word of God." But it is impossible to conceive what is meant by such a principle of grace as this. It cannot be any *sentiment* respecting Christ or his salvation, since it is supposed to be previous to the knowledge of the word

of God wherein alone he is revealed. Nor can it be any *disposition* or *affection* of mind towards Christ; for the mind cannot be affected with any object of which it has no knowledge. This mysterious principle is supposed to be implanted in the heart by the *operation of the Spirit*: but the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the truth, and operates upon the mind not physically, or abstract from the word, but by means of it, enlightening the understanding in its doctrine, and inclining the will by its motives; so that the word itself is the very principle implanted in the heart by the Spirit. Men are born of the Spirit; but it is *by the incorruptible seed of the word*, John iii. 5. 1 Pet. i. 23. It is of his own will that God begets men to the faith; but it is *with the word of truth*, James i. 18.; for faith cometh *by hearing*, and hearing *by the word of God*, Rom. x. 17. To suppose, therefore, that the Spirit implants a principle of grace, as it is called, in the heart, without the word, or previous to any knowledge of it, is altogether unintelligible and unscriptural: it makes the word of God of little consequence, opens a flood-gate for wild enthusiasm, and sets aside the scripture rule for distinguishing the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error, Isa. viii. 20. 1 John iv. 6.

Many zealously contend, that faith is an *appropriation* of Christ, *i. e.* “a persuasion that Christ and his salvation is *mine*; that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*,” &c. That real Christians have ground to believe their interest in Christ; that the knowledge of this is attainable, ought to be sought after, and is attained by many, is freely granted: but true faith, whatever it be, is required of all men; and what ground have all the hearers of the gospel to believe that Christ is theirs? The general *declaration*, “that Christ came to save sinners,” will not warrant such a belief, either upon the

scheme of universal or particular redemption. Not upon the *universal* scheme: for, according to that, Christ came to save many sinners, who shall never be saved by him. Nor upon the *particular* scheme; for if Christ did not come to save every individual sinner of mankind, which he certainly did not, this declaration does not by itself assure any that they are among the number he came to save. It is alledged, “that God hath made an universal *grant* of Christ in the word to mankind, sinners as such, and that this warrants every one to believe he is theirs.” But allowing this to be true, yet as it is owned that this supposed grant made to *all*, does not actually convey Christ but to *some*, it can never warrant all the hearers of the gospel to believe he is theirs. To suppose that Christ is given to any who reap no saving benefit from him, is not very honourable to the Saviour. God gives his Son to none but those to whom he also with him freely giveth all things, abundance of grace, the gift of righteousness, and eternal life, Rom. viii. 32. ch. v. 17, 21.; for, “he that hath the Son hath life,” 1 John v. 12. It is further affirmed, “that God *commands* all who hear the gospel to believe that Christ is theirs, and assures them of success in their appropriating Christ.” But there is no such command in all the word of God. All are indeed commanded to believe the gospel, or the testimony of God concerning his Son, and the promise of salvation is made to whosoever believeth this; but all are not commanded to believe that Christ is theirs. This would be to command many to believe a lie; for it is not true of all who hear the gospel that Christ is theirs; nor can their believing this convert it into a truth. God does not command men to believe any thing without evidence, and which is not true in itself whether they believe it or not.

It would be almost endless to take notice of every absurdity which has been advanced upon the subject of faith; but those already hinted at have a very pernicious tendency. When men conceive faith to be a principle wrought in the heart by the Spirit, abstract from the word, it will lead them to look within themselves for the operation of some spirit, very different from the Spirit of the truth who speaks in the scriptures, whose work it is to guide into all truth, to testify of Christ, and to take of his and shew it unto us, John xvi. 13, 14. It will make them seek after this inward principle, in the first instance, as the main hinge of their hope, and prevent them from taking any comfort from the word till they find, or rather fancy they find, this mysterious principle wrought in them, which, after all, seems to be only a principle of blind enthusiasm, or self-conceit.

On the other hand, when faith is confounded with its effects, and made to consist of a number of good dispositions and vigorous exertions of the mind, it limits the extent, and clouds the immediate freeness, of divine grace to the chief of sinners, by confining it to such as are supposed to be better qualified than others. It sets the gospel ground of hope at a distance from the self-condemned, who cannot find such good dispositions in themselves, and puts them upon striving to attain them, or to exert some acts, in order to be justified. The consequence is, that they either fall into despair after much fruitless labour, or if they obtain some fluctuating peace in this way, it is not founded on what they believe concerning Christ, but upon a better opinion of themselves, or of the dispositions and actings of their minds towards him; and, in this case, it makes little odds whether they call these things *acts of faith*, or *works*

of the law, or whether they thank God or themselves that they are not as other men are. There is surely a wide difference between believing, that God will justify only such as are well disposed and properly qualified, and believing “that he justifies the ungodly freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” Rom. iii. 24. ch. iv. 5. And the effects of these two faiths are equally different. The former leads a man to seek relief to his guilty conscience, and peace with God, from something to be wrought in him, or done by him. The latter leads a man directly to the character and work of Christ, as the sole foundation of his hope and peace with God.

The doctrine of appropriation is also of a very bad tendency; for to make it the duty of all to believe, in the first instance, that Christ is theirs, builds up many in the belief of a lie instead of the truth; establishes presumption upon principle, and draws in conscience itself to be a friendly supporter of self-deceit. And as it leads them to expect no benefit from the belief of the truth, without a good opinion of their own state, so when the appropriating fancy had supplied them with that, it supersedes the necessity of working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and of giving diligence to make their calling and election sure, as the scripture directs believers to do. This they consider as legal, and cannot endure it. On the other hand, such a view of faith is very discouraging to many of the real children of God, who, though they believe the gospel, esteem Christ precious, and would not quit their hope in him for the world; yet are not so easily satisfied as to their own particular interest, which requires the testimony of conscience both to their faith and its fruits. But it is time I should now proceed to shew,

II. What that faith is in particular to which the promise of salvation is made.

It has already been shewn, that faith in its nature or essence, as distinguished from every other fruit of the Spirit, is neither more nor less than *belief*; and that divine faith in general is the belief of whatever God hath revealed in his word, and that upon his own authority. But as the promise of salvation is not made to the belief of every truth, nor even to the belief of many scripture truths; and as it is impossible to distinguish one faith from another by any difference in the *nature* of believing, that being the same in all cases; therefore, saving faith must be distinguished from every other by its *object*, and its *effects*. Its *object* is what we have at present to do with; for herein lies the radical difference, and from this it derives all the importance and efficacy ascribed to it. Faith cannot so much as exist without an object; for when nothing is believed, there can be no belief. It saves in no other way than as it respects a saving object; and all its influence upon the heart and life is, properly speaking, the influence of the truth believed. Therefore, in speaking of that faith to which the promise of salvation is made, we must drop the question about the *nature* and *manner* of believing, and inquire *what* it is that men are called to believe unto their salvation.

On this head the words of our text gives us sufficient information: "Go ye into all the world," says Christ, "and preach the GOSPEL to every creature. He that believeth,"—Believeth what? What else but the GOSPEL, which, in the words immediately preceding, he commands them to preach? As "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," *i. e.* the gospel, Rom. x. 16, 17. so the very design of publishing the gospel

was, that men of all nations might hear and believe it; for it was "according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith," Rom. xvi. 26. This was also the end of writing it: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," John xx. 31.; for as this truth is the great subject of the gospel testimony, so to believe it is to believe the gospel. When the gospel at the first began to be spoken by the Lord in person, it was that which he expressly called men to believe: "The time is fulfilled," says he, "and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel," Mark i. 15. The apostles, in pursuance of their commission, "testified the gospel of the grace of God," Acts xx. 24.; and true faith is described to be a belief of their testimony, 2 Thess. i. 10. Paul, having stated the gospel which he had preached unto the Corinthians, adds, "so we preach, and so ye believed," 1 Cor. xv. 11. *i. e.* ye believed the doctrine which we preached. It is needless to multiply citations on so plain a point; the whole New Testament clearly demonstrates, that it is the gospel which men are called to believe. And as the gospel is the subject matter of true faith, so it is called the one faith, the faith once delivered to the saints, the faith of God's elect, Eph. iv. 5. Jude ver. 3. Titus i. 1.; and all who really believe it, have obtained like precious faith with the apostles, 2 Pet. i. 1.

But here it may be asked, What is the gospel? To this I answer: The gospel is the glad news of the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in the coming, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son of God, and of the salvation, which he hath thereby obtained for sinners of all nations. It is the revelation of the sovereign free grace and love of God towards a

guilty perishing world, in giving his only begotten Son to die for the offences of men, and in raising him again from the dead for their justification, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 14—19. Rom. iv. 24, 25. The gospel is a witness, record, or testimony, concerning Christ and his salvation, John iii. 33. Acts xxii. 18. 2 Cor. i. 6. 2 Tim. i. 8. Rev. i. 2, 9. ch. xii. 17. ch. xix. 10. and is termed “the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son,” 1 John v. 9, 10. Now that which he hath testified of him is briefly this: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” Matth. iii. 17. ch. xvii. 5.; “and this is the record, that God has given to us” *i. e.* to all who believe, “eternal life; and this life is in his Son,” 1 John v. 11. The truth of this testimony he hath demonstrated by raising him from the dead, and glorifying him; for hereby he declared him *his Son* with power, Rom. i. 4.; and shewed, in the clearest manner, that he was *well pleased in him*, and in his atoning sacrifice for our sins, for he raised him again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. Hereby also he exhibited in Christ, as the first fruits of them that slept, that *eternal life* which he gives unto those who believe, for it is *that life which is in his Son*, as raised from the dead, John xiv. 19. 1 John i. 1, 2. The preaching of the gospel by the apostles, was their declaring or making known this testimony of God, with its import and evidence, 1 Cor. ii. 1. 2 Pet. i. 16—19. 1 John i. 1—4. ch. iv. 14, 15. They preached “that Jesus is the *Son of God*,” Acts ix. 20. or the word made flesh, God manifested in the flesh, John i. 14. 1 Tim. iii. 16. They testified and proved “that he is *the Christ*,” Acts ix. 22. ch. xvii. 3. ch. xviii. 5. or the anointed prophet, priest, and king, that was promised, Acts iii. 22. Heb. v. 6. Acts ii. 29—37.

They declared "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures," 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. and that when he had thus by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he reigns as King and Lord of all, and officiates as a merciful and faithful High-priest over the house of God, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, Heb. i. 3. Acts x. 36. Heb. vii. 25. They also testified "that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead," Acts x. 42. This is a brief sketch of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, the word of faith which the apostles preached, and which is to be found at large in their writings; and this is what all men are called to believe.

What remains now is to shew, that *salvation* is connected with the belief of that truth which is openly and plainly declared in the gospel; or, in other words, that the belief of the gospel testimony is *true* and *saving faith*. And here again the words of our text are sufficiently plain and express. Our Lord having commanded his apostles "to preach the GOSPEL to every creature," adds, "He that believeth" *viz.* the gospel "SHALL BE SAVED." This clearly shews not only that it is the gospel which is to be believed, but that *salvation* is the consequence of believing it. Salvation is only connected with true faith; but it is connected with the belief of the gospel; therefore that belief must be true faith. This single text, although there were not another to the same purpose in the whole bible, sufficiently proves the point. But as many affirm, in direct opposition to this, that the belief of the gospel is of little consequence as

to salvation, I shall produce some other passages which are equally decisive on this head.

It has been already observed, that the gospel is frequently held forth under the notion of a *testimony, witness, or record*, concerning Christ; and it is the testimony of God, of Jesus, of the Spirit, and of the apostles. Now eternal life is connected with the belief of this testimony, which therefore must be true faith: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," 1 John v. 9—13. It can admit of no doubt that this testimony is the gospel with its evidence, for the apostle terms the gospel which he preached *the testimony of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 1. and it is only in the gospel that we have the testimony of the Divine Three that Jesus is the Son of God. Faith is here expressed in various ways, according as it relates to the testimony, the testifier, or the subject of the testimony, such as, receiving the witness of God, believing on the Son of God, having the witness in ourselves, having the Son, &c. all which mean the same thing, *viz.* the belief of the gospel through the Spirit. To receive the testimony of the gospel is to *believe God*, because he is the testifier; it is "the witness of God." To believe God in the gospel testimony is to *believe on the Son of God*, because the Son is the subject of that testimony; it is "the record that God gave of his Son." He that believeth on the

Son of God *hath the witness in himself*; for by the Spirit of the truth he now understands and perceives the import, evidence, suitableness, and excellency of the testimony concerning Christ in the gospel, and has joy and peace from it; and so that witness or word of faith, is in his heart believing it, Rom. x. 8, 9. “He that *hath the Son*” is he who believeth the doctrine of the gospel testimony concerning him; for “he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he *hath both the Father and the Son*,” 2 John ver. 9. As therefore to believe the gospel is to receive the witness of God, to believe on the Son of God, to have the witness in ourselves, to have the Son, and as he that hath the Son hath eternal life, it is clear that the belief of the gospel testimony must be true and saving faith.

The gospel testimony is also the *testimony of the Son*, and of him it is said, “What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true; for he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,” John iii. 32—36. It is evident that the gospel is the testimony of the Son, for it is termed *the testimony of our Lord*, 2 Tim. i. 8. *the testimony of Jesus*, Rev. i. 2. both as testified *by him*, and testifying *of him*; therefore, to *receive his testimony*, and *set to our seal that God is true*, is to believe the gospel; and nothing more is meant by *believing on the Son*; for it is opposed to the expression “he that *believeth not the Son*,” and as the doctrine of his person, and of the whole of his character and work as the Saviour is contained in the gospel testimony, so we cannot believe any thing concerning

him but what is therein testified. Since, therefore, he that believeth Christ's testimony in the gospel *hath everlasting life*, that belief must be true and saving faith.

The gospel is also the *testimony of the apostles*, Acts xxii. 18. because they were chosen witnesses, and commissioned to publish it, John xv. 27. Mark xvi. 15. and as they testified the gospel of the grace of God, Acts xx. 24. so true faith is described to be a belief of their testimony: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels—when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, (because *our testimony was believed among you*,) in that day," 2 Thess. i. 7—11. If those who believe the testimony of the apostles shall obtain *rest* when Christ shall be revealed from heaven; if he shall then be *glorified in them* as his saints, and *admired in all them that believe* that testimony, then that belief must undoubtedly be true and saving faith.

I have before noticed, that the great and fundamental truth contained in the gospel testimony is this: "That Jesus is the Christ the Son of God." Now salvation is always connected with the belief of that truth in its true and genuine sense, which therefore must be true faith. When Peter confessed this truth as his faith, Jesus approved of it as the effect of divine teaching, and pronounced him blessed, Matt. xvi. 16, 17. When the eunuch confessed the same truth, Philip sustained it as a confession of true faith, or of believing with all his heart, and so baptized him, Acts viii. 37, 38. John, showing the design of writing his gospel, says, "These are written that ye might believe *that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*, and that believing ye might have life

through his name," John xx. 31. If any would consistently deny that the belief of this truth is true and saving faith, he must also deny that the life here connected with it is spiritual and eternal life, which I suppose few serious persons will venture to do. The same apostle says, "Whosoever believeth *that Jesus is the Christ* is born of God," 1 John v. 1.; and a little below, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth *that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*," ver. 3, 4. No faith but what is true and saving is the effect of being born of God; no other faith can possibly overcome the world; but it is here declared, that he is born of God, and overcomes the world, who believeth that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; which therefore must be true and saving faith.

This truth not only imports the dignity of his person, but also his mediatory character and work, as the Saviour of lost sinners. The apostles, in declaring the gospel testimony, preached Christ as crucified, and as raised from the dead, with the important ends of both, and true faith is described as respecting him in this view. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel which he had preached unto them, "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures:" and he assures them, that they were saved by this gospel, if they held the faith of it consistently; "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain," 1 Cor. xv. 1—5. The same apostle having shewn that righteousness was imputed to Abraham believing God's promise respecting his seed, adds, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was

imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," Rom. iv. 23, 24, 25. To believe on God, as having delivered his Son for our offences, is to believe that we are offenders against God, and deserve his wrath; but that out of his infinite mercy he hath inflicted the punishment we deserved upon his own Son, delivering him to death for our offences, and making him a sacrifice for our sins. To believe on God as having raised him again for our justification, is to believe that God is fully satisfied with the sacrifice of his Son as a complete atonement for sin, and demands no more in order to free us from condemnation and entitle us to life; and so hath raised him again for our justification. This is to believe on him that justifieth the ungodly, chap. iv. 5. to have faith in Christ's blood, chap. iii. 25.; and as it is declared that righteousness shall be imputed to us if we believe this, it must certainly be justifying faith. To the same purpose is the following passage: "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 6—11. The "righteousness which is of faith," or the gospel doctrine of

justification by faith, forbids us to say any thing in our heart, which may import, that Christ has not come from heaven, and in his death and resurrection done all that was necessary to our justification ; or, (allowing he hath done so) that he is at such a DISTANCE from us, and justification by him so far beyond our reach, that we may as well think to scale heaven to bring him down from thence, or descend into the deep to bring him up again from the dead, as perform what is necessary on our part to obtain it. This language of the unbelieving heart, the righteousness which is of faith forbids ; and, in opposition to this, it saith, “ The word is NIGH thee ; that is,” saith the apostle, “ the word of faith which we preach,” and which testifies that Christ died for the offences, and was raised again for the justification of sinners : this word is so very nigh thee, as to be “ even in thy mouth” when thou confessest it, “ and in thy heart” when thou believest it ; so that though Christ be at a distance as to his bodily presence, yet there is no occasion for any arduous labour, nor indeed for any labour at all, in order to come at him, or to be justified by him ; for his salvation is brought near to the most guilty, helpless, and wretched, and actually conveyed by means of the gospel testimony concerning him ; so “ that if,” according to the true import of that testimony, “ thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” To confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, is openly to own and acknowledge him to be the Christ the Son of the living God, as Peter and the eunuch did, Matth. xvi. 16. John vi. 69. Acts viii. 37. It is to confess to the glory of God the Father, that he who became obedient to the death of the cross, is exalted as

Lord over all, Phil. ii. 8—12. and also to call upon him as such, Rom. x. 12, 13. But as a verbal confession is not of itself sufficient, therefore it is added, “and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead.” The belief of Christ’s resurrection with its import is always spoken of as true faith. This is to believe on him that quickeneth the dead, Rom. iv. 17.; that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ver. 24. It is the faith or belief of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead, Col. ii. 12. and through him to believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God, 1 Pet. i. 21. This truth imports all that the gospel testifies concerning him, as, that he is *the Christ, the Son of God*; for he was “determined the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,” Rom. i. 4.—That *he died for our sins*; for it is a resurrection from that death for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. That he hath made *reconciliation by his blood*; for the Father, as “the God of peace, hath brought him again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” which was shed for the remission of sins, that he might present it with acceptance in the heavenly sanctuary, Heb. xiii. 20. chap. ix. 12, 24. That all who believe on him shall be *raised up from the dead at the last day* to inherit eternal life; for, in his resurrection, he “is become the first-fruits of them that slept,” 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23. and “he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus,” 2 Cor. iv. 14. 1 Thess. iv. 14. This resurrection to eternal glory is “the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;” and is to be effected by “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working

of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," Eph. i. 18—21. Lastly, his resurrection imports, that *he is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead*; for of this God hath given "assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts xvii. 31. It is evident, therefore, that the resurrection of Christ includes the substance of the gospel testimony; and it is no less evident that the belief of this important fact in its proper sense is true justifying faith; for it is expressly and pointedly declared, "That if thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

To these proofs I shall only add a single text more. That which the gospel testifies of Christ is most frequently termed *the truth*; see the following texts, John v. 33. chap. viii. 32. chap. xviii. 37. 2 Cor. iv. 2. chap. xiii. 8. Gal. iii. 1. chap. v. 7. 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. 1 Tim. ii. 4. chap. iv. 3. 2 Tim. ii. 18, 25. chap. iii. 7, 8. chap. iv. 4. Tit. i. 14. Heb. x. 26. 1 John ii. 21, 22. and true faith is described to be the *belief of the truth*. Paul writing to the Thessalonians, says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and BELIEF OF THE TRUTH; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. If the belief of the truth be the fruit of *election to salvation*; if it is inseparably connected with the *sanctification of the Spirit*; if it is to this belief that God effectually *calls* the elect by the gospel, and if the end of this faith is their *obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*; then certainly the belief of the truth must be true and saving faith.

PART II.

I have shewn, in a former discourse, that true and saving faith is neither more nor less than a belief of the *gospel*, which Christ commissioned his apostles to preach to every creature, which is the *testimony of God* concerning his Son, and is emphatically termed *the truth*; since it is to the belief of this truth the promise of salvation is made, as well as every saving and sanctifying effect on the heart and life ascribed.

I would further observe, that a man's faith is true or false, saving or unprofitable, according to the truth or falsehood, saving or unprofitable nature of what he believes; and as true and saving faith cannot so much as exist without a true and saving object, so the whole efficacy ascribed to faith in relation to salvation, arises from the nature and importance of the truth believed. Hence it follows, that if the belief of the gospel, in its true sense, is not saving faith, the reason must be, that the gospel does not contain the saving truth, or reveal an object sufficient to save. Every Christian who understands and believes the gospel, and finds all his salvation in what it reveals, must be greatly shocked at such a conclusion as this; yet how many are there who deny that the belief of the gospel is true faith, nay, who reproach and despise it as only the faith of Judas, Simon Magus, and devils! and while this is their real sentiment, it is not easy to conceive how they can look upon the gospel itself as of much consequence, or have their own faith and hope founded on what it testifies. It is, however, to be hoped, that some who speak in this manner are not properly adverting to the meaning of their own words.

But as there are counterfeits of faith, it may be proper to say something on that subject before we proceed to the next head.

Though men should have a general belief that something called the gospel is true, and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, yet if they are either ignorant or have a false view of the gospel, or of the sense in which Jesus is the Christ, they have not true faith. We read of many Jews who *believed in his name* when they saw the miracles which he did, to whom he would not commit himself, because he knew all men, John ii. 23, 24.; and of many others who *believed on him*, who were insensible of their bondage to sin, and ignorant of the truth which makes free, John viii. 30—37. They believed he was the promised Messiah, or prophet that should come into the world, but it was in the carnal Jewish sense. They were ignorant of his true character and mission, and of the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and salvation, and hence we find some of them were for taking him by force and making him an earthly king, chap. vi. 14, 15. As therefore they had not the true knowledge of the Messiah, so they could not have true faith in him. Simon Magus is also said to *believe*, upon the authority of the miracles which Philip wrought, Acts. viii. 13.; but he soon manifested his brutish ignorance, as well as egregious wickedness, in thinking that the gift of God might be purchased with money, ver. 19—22. and so had no true faith.

Though men should believe all the gospel facts relating to Christ, yet if they are ignorant of, or deny the import of these facts, or connect some error with the truth which is subversive of it, they have not true faith. The Judaisers professed to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that he died, rose from the dead, and was exalted

at the Father's right hand ; but they overturned all this again in maintaining, that except men were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved, Acts. xv. 1, and so made Christ to die in vain, and entirely perverted the gospel upon the great article of a sinner's acceptance with God, Gal. i. 6, 7. chap. i. 21. chap. v. 2—5. Some of the Corinthians who professed to believe that Christ rose from the dead, according to the scriptures, overturned that fact by denying its import, *viz.* the resurrection of the saints, and so their faith was vain, 1 Cor. xv. 11—19. There are many errors besides these which are equally inconsistent with true faith ; but in general it may be said, that he who believes that *Jesus is the Christ*, in a sense different from the apostles, or holds any thing in connection with that truth which is subversive of its real meaning and import, as explained at large in their writings, is not possessed of true faith.

Again, though there can be no true faith without knowledge, yet there may be a kind of speculative knowledge without faith or belief. There is a wide difference between *understanding* the *terms* of a proposition, and *believing* the *truth* of it. A man may be so far enlightened in his judgment as to be able to *confess with his mouth* the saving truth, and to explain himself about the way of salvation in so clear and distinct a manner, as to leave no ground to suspect that he has any different meaning from the apostles, and yet, after all, not *believe in his heart* that it is *true*, or receive it as the testimony of HIM who cannot lie. Nay, he may speculate upon the evidence of the gospel, and think it not altogether incredible ; like Agrippa, he may even be almost persuaded of its truth, while, after all, he can risk nothing of importance upon it. Thus multitudes are daily deceiving themselves with orthodox opinions instead of faith. Did they only

give as much credit to the testimony of God as they give to the testimony of their fellow-men, what a different effect would it have upon their hearts and lives! They often venture their all in this world upon human testimony, and sustain it as sufficient evidence, even in matters of life and death; and did they give equal credit to the divine testimony, it could not fail to produce answerable effects.

Lastly, whatever men may think of their knowledge and belief of the gospel, yet if they do not in some measure perceive its *excellence, importance, and suitability* to their lost condition as sinners, they do not in reality know and believe it. The gospel is not only a true saying, but a saying supremely excellent, good and interesting, and so worthy of all acceptance, 1 Tim. i. 15. It exhibits a scheme of salvation full of God, worthy of him, manifestative of his true character, and in all respects sufficient and free for the very chief of sinners, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 6. If it is not perceived in this light, then it is not believed to be what it really is, or what it is revealed to be, *i. e.* the *truth* is not believed; for it is as essential a part of truth, and as clearly revealed, that the gospel is good news, glad tidings of great joy, that Christ is precious, and altogether lovely, and that his salvation is the one thing that is needful, as that there is a gospel, a Christ, a salvation at all. Our Lord distinguishes true faith as an *understanding of the word*, Matt. xiii. 23.; but the word is not properly understood till its goodness and excellence is perceived. This is to know the grace of God in truth, Col. i. 6. The stony ground hearers must have had some kind of understanding of the word, without which they could not be said to receive it with *joy*; and to *believe* for a while, Matt. xiii. 20. Luke

viii. 13.; but as persecution made them fall away, it is evident that they did not perceive and believe its real value and importance, otherwise they would rather have suffered the loss of all things than relinquish it. He also describes true faith in this manner: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. To *know* the only true God is not merely to know that he exists, but also to know his true character or perfections as revealed in the gospel. This is to know his name as it is declared by Christ, John xvii. 6, 26.; and they who so know him will undoubtedly put their trust in him, Ps. ix. 10. To *know* Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is not only to know that there is such a person, but also to perceive his excellency, amiableness, and suitableness as the Saviour, according as the gospel describes him. It is such a knowledge of him as renders him precious to all who believe, 1 Pet. ii. 7.; while those who believe not the gospel report, see no beauty in him that they should desire him, Isa. liii. 2. True faith is always represented as affecting the heart, and influencing the life. It is *in believing* that men are filled with all joy and peace, and abound in hope; it is faith that purifieth the heart, overcometh the world, and worketh by love, Acts xv. 9. 1 John v. 4. Gal. v. 6. Now if we attend either to scripture or experience, we shall find; that it is not merely the *existence*, but *nature* and *quality* of objects, and our *concern* in them, which affect and influence us; faith, therefore, must be a belief of the quality, as well as reality of its object. The gospel, which was immediately revealed to the apostles, is termed, "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. This they published to the world with great

plainness of speech, chap. iii. 12. None therefore believe on Christ through their word, John xvii. 20., or as they preached him, but such as perceive in some measure the glory of the divine character shining in his face. Accordingly the apostle represents those who believe not the gospel, as blind to this glorious manifestation of God in Christ: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "The natural man," through the culpable blindness, prejudice, and aversion of his mind, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," however clearly revealed in the gospel; "neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. So far is he from discerning the wisdom, power, and grace of God in the scheme of salvation through a crucified Saviour, that it appears to him weakness and foolishness. Hence the necessity of the influence of the Spirit of God, to make men know and believe the truth and excellency of what the gospel reveals.

These hints may serve to show in what sense false professors are said to believe. But whatever may be said of the faith of wicked men, or even of devils, it must still be held as a firm truth, that all who believe in their heart the gospel in that sense wherein the apostles preached it, have obtained the like precious faith with them, and shall be saved. I shall now,

III. Prove that it is the indispensable DUTY of all who hear the gospel to believe it unto the saving of the soul.

It may justly be wondered at, that any who profess to admit the truth of the gospel itself, should ever so much

as entertain the least doubt that it is the duty of men to believe it with a true and saving faith; yet strange as it may seem, multitudes of professors at this day strenuously deny this. They admit indeed, that it is the duty of men to believe like Simon Magus, or as hypocrites do, but deny that it is the duty of any man to believe unto the saving of his soul, any more than it is the duty of a man, naturally dead, to live. This sentiment is grounded upon a complication of errors respecting the extent of men's obligations, the nature of their inability, the nature of divine grace, the Spirit's work, the gospel, faith, &c. I have not time at present to go fully into the subject; but as the sentiment just mentioned is of a practical nature, and must have a pernicious tendency to harden men's conscience against conviction of sin, because they believe not in Christ, John xvi. 9.; I shall produce some scripture arguments to prove, "that true and saving faith is the indispensable duty of all who hear the gospel." And,

1. The word of God expressly commands all men without exception to believe on Christ for salvation. In Isa. xlv. 22. the Lord addresses men thus: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." If we compare the three following verses with Rom. xiv. 10, 11. Philip. ii. 10, 11. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. we shall find that this is a command to look unto Christ, in whom God is manifested as "a just God and a Saviour," ver. 21. To *look* unto him is to believe on him, and so to believe on him as to be *saved* by him; for it is added, "and be ye saved;" and this command to believe unto salvation is addressed to men *universally*, even to "all the ends of the earth," so that it is commensurate to the extent of the commission in our text "to preach the gospel to every

creature." In Isa. lv. 3. the following call is given to sinners, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." This is evidently a *gospel* call, as appears from the apostle's explanation of the sure mercies of David, Acts xiii. 4. It is a call to the *wicked* and the *unrighteous*, as described, ver. 7. It is a call to *faith* and *repentance*, which are imported in these words, "Incline your ear, and come unto me," and (ver. 7.) "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." Further, it is a call to *true* faith and repentance, for the promise is, "your soul shall live;—the Lord will have mercy on him," and "abundantly pardon."

In the New Testament we meet with many commands or calls to sinners to believe in Christ. John the Baptist, who had a divine commission, "baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, That THEY SHOULD BELIEVE on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus," Acts xix. 4. The people whom John thus addressed were the multitude that came unto him, many of whom were a generation of vipers, Matt. iii. 5—13. He told them, "that they *should* believe on Jesus Christ;" he must therefore have considered it as their *duty*; and he could not mean any thing short of *saving* faith, for he says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John iii. 36. Jesus himself, in his personal ministry addressed men thus: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel," Mark i. 15. The persons addressed were mostly *unconverted sinners*; for he came not to call the righteous,

but *sinners* to repentance, Mark ii. 17. He calls such to "believe the gospel," which I have already shewn to be saving faith; and surely he meant nothing short of this, or that they should believe in vain. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," John vii. 37, 38. This is evidently a call to the *unbelieving* Jews. A call to *believe on him*, as he himself explains it, and to believe on him *savingly*, for the promise of the Spirit is annexed to it. He represents the preaching of the gospel under the notion of inviting guests to a marriage supper, where all things are prepared, and ready for their use. The king commands his servants to invite all sorts of guests, and *bid them come* unto the marriage, nay, to *compel* them to come in that his house may be filled, Matt. xxii. 2—15. Luke xiv. 16—24. The supper represents the spiritual and eternal blessings of the new covenant. The king's pressing invitations are God's calls to sinners to *believe* in Christ, and so partake of these blessings. The persons invited were evidently *unbelievers*: for those who were first bidden refused, viz. the unbelieving Jews, and the last invitation was addressed to the idolatrous Gentiles, who, till then, were without God, and without hope in the world. Paul informs us how the apostles executed their commission in compelling men to come in; "All things (says he) are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech (men*) by us, we pray (them) in Christ's stead, (saying) Be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for us," &c. 2 Cor. v. 18—21. Here Paul is setting before the Corinthians the substance of the apostolic message to the world at large, Gentiles as well as Jews, viz. That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and that this reconciliation was effected by making Christ the sacrifice for the sins of men. This was to declare that *all things were ready*, as expressed in the parable. But this was not all; they were also commissioned, as the mouth of God, and in Christ's stead, to urge and beseech men to be reconciled unto God; "God doth beseech by us, we pray in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled unto God." This was to *bid* to the marriage, to *compel them to come in*. Here then we have God's call to men *while enemies*, for it is a call to be reconciled to him; and as none are actually reconciled unto God in their minds till they believe in the atonement, it must undoubtedly be a call to *faith* in Christ, as the only way of reconciliation. The same apostle informs the elders at Ephesus, that in preaching the gospel he "testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xx. 21. To "testify repentance towards God," was (as he elsewhere expresses it) to show men "that *they should repent*, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance," Acts xxvi. 20. or to testify that "God now *commandeth* all men, every where, to

* The pronoun *you* is not in the Greek, and the sense requires that the supplement should be *men* or *the world*.

repent," Acts xvii. 30. chap. xiv. 15. In like manner, to "testify faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," was to call men to "believe the gospel," Mark i. 15., to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be saved," Acts xvi. 31. or to testify that this is God's "*commandment* that they should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23.

Many other passages might be cited to the same purpose, but those already adduced, clearly show, that God *commands* and *calls* all who hear the gospel to believe to the saving of the soul. If therefore these commands and calls are of divine authority; if men are under any obligations to obey God; if it is right to do so, and wrong to do otherwise, it undeniably follows, that it is the indispensable DUTY of all who hear the gospel to believe it unto their salvation.

2. Unbelief, which is the opposite of faith, is always represented as a very great and heinous sin against God. It is part of the work of the Spirit to convince men of this; "And when he is come (says our Lord) he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not in me," John xvi. 8, 9. Of the Jews, he says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now have they no cloak for their sin—If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father," chap. xv. 22, 24. That which is thrice termed *sin* here is evidently unbelief. Other sins they had been guilty of; but they would not have been guilty of this sin, had not the truth been declared unto them, and sufficiently confirmed, so as to leave them without excuse. The apostle John says, "He that believeth not God hath made him

a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son," 1 John v. 10. To hold God for a liar is surely a sin of the deepest dye. The unbelieving heart is termed *an evil heart*, Heb. iii. 12. and there are many evils in the heart of man, which both occasion and attend unbelief. It is frequently ascribed to *ignorance*, Matt. xiii. 19. Rom. x. 3. chap. xi. 7, 25. yet not to simple ignorance, from want of information, or natural capacity, in which case it would be excusable, John ix. 41. chap. xv. 22, 24. but such as arises from the agency of the god of this world blinding the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. it is wilful ignorance, occasioned by their loving darkness and hating the light, John iii. 19, 20. and so they are represented as having closed their eyes lest they should see, Matth. xiii. 15. From this it appears, that unbelief is founded not merely on simple ignorance, but *aversion* from the things of God; and it is also attributed to *pride* and the *love of this present world*, John v. 44. Matt. xxii. 5. It must therefore be exceedingly sinful, and especially as it makes God a liar, and rejects his amazing love and grace, as revealed in the gospel.

Now, if unbelief be a *sin*, and seated in the depravity of the heart, as has been shown, it necessarily follows, that faith, its opposite, must be a *duty*; for as the opposite of every sin is duty, and the opposite of every duty is sin; so, if believing were not a duty, unbelief could be no sin, for sin is a want of conformity to, or transgression of the rule of duty. If it be said, that men cannot believe, and therefore it is not their duty; this is only to say in other words, that men cannot help their unbelief, and therefore it is not their sin. The fact is, men's inability, who enjoy the light of the

gospel, is not of a *natural* but *moral* kind, and therefore culpable.

3. Faith is frequently represented as *obedience*. It is said, that a great number of the priests were *obedient* to the faith, Acts vi. 7.; *i. e.* believed the gospel. The unbelief of the Jews is termed *not obeying* the gospel; "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" Rom. x. 16. When the Galatians were subverted from the belief of free justification without works, they are said not to *obey* the truth; "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?" Gal. iii. 1. Again, the gospel is said to be "according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith," Rom. xvi. 26.; *i. e.* that men might believe it. Faith is properly called *obedience*, because it corresponds with God's *design* in causing the gospel to be published, and his *command* to believe it. Now, if faith be *obedience*, then it must be a *duty*; for to obey God, and to do what is our duty are only different expressions, signifying one and the same thing.

4. Lastly, God hath promised *salvation* to him that believeth, and threatened *damnation* to him that believeth not. Both of these are clearly expressed in the words of our text: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." I might cite a great many passages to the same purpose, but shall select only the following: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only

begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John iii. 16—19. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," chap. iii. 36. "The Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. And to you who are troubled he will give rest with us, —when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day," 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

In these passages, freedom from condemnation, and eternal life and rest are promised to him that believeth; and, on the other hand, condemnation, the wrath of God, and everlasting destruction are threatened against such as believe not. Does not this, in the most striking manner, demonstrate that God approves of believing, and is highly displeased at unbelief, and consequently, that the former is a *duty*, and the latter a *sin*?

In opposition to this, some affirm "that such passages mention believing and not believing, not as being *duty* or *sin*, but only as mere *descriptive characters* of those who shall be saved or damned; and that as faith is not the *procuring cause* of salvation, so neither is unbelief of damnation." But though faith is not the meritorious or procuring cause of salvation, that being the gift of God, through Jesus Christ, Rom. vi. 23. even as faith itself is, Phil. i. 29. yet it is not the less a duty. Will

any maintain, that nothing can be duty unless it *merits* salvation? If nothing is a duty but what *merits* salvation, then believers themselves can perform no duty, for they cannot merit salvation by any of their performances. If nothing is a duty which God works in men by his word and Spirit, then it is not the duty of believers to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, since it is God who worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Again, if nothing is a duty which men cannot perform of themselves without divine influence, then it is no man's duty to love the Lord with all his heart, as the law enjoins, since this requires that the Lord should circumcise the heart to love him, Deut. xxx. 6. Faith is not a mere *descriptive character* of those who shall be saved. It is *right* to view things as God has revealed them, and to believe all that he says. Faith gives glory to God, Rom. iv. 20. is agreeable to him, and without faith it is impossible to please him, Heb. xi. 6. The fruits of faith are also well pleasing and acceptable to him through Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 11. Eph. v. 10. Heb. xiii. 16. 1 John iii. 22. and shall be rewarded at the resurrection of the just, Luke xiv. 14. Gal. vi. 9. Matt. xxv. 23, 34, 35, 36. Therefore, though it is God's *gift* to believe, it is nevertheless men's *duty*; and though eternal life is likewise the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, and entirely of grace; yet it is graciously promised to believers as a *reward* of their faith and obedience. Neither is unbelief a mere *descriptive character* of those who shall be damned, but a most heinous *sin* against God, as has been shewn; and so richly deserves that death which is the just *wages of sin*. And though men are by nature in a state of condemnation as transgressors of God's law, yet such of them as hear the gospel and continue in that

state only through unbelief, and as it is itself the most aggravated of all other sins, so their condemnation is chiefly ascribed to it: "He that believeth not is condemned already," and the reason given is, "BECAUSE he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation," *i. e.* the chief cause of condemnation, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John iii. 18, 19.

I have now finished what I proposed, and shall just conclude with a word of caution.

1. If he that believeth shall be saved, and if he that believeth not shall be damned, then it highly concerns all to take heed *what* they believe, or receive as gospel; and the more so, as many false teachers have gone out into the world, who bring not the apostolic doctrine, but on the contrary make light of it; declare that the belief of it is of little consequence, and even deny that true faith is a duty, whilst they deceive and amuse their hearers with something else, which can neither be termed law nor gospel, faith nor practice.

2. It also highly concerns every man to examine whether he himself *really believes* the gospel; for if this is not the case, he has not as yet any interest in the promise of salvation, but lies exposed to the threatened condemnation. I admit, that when a man believes the word, he will experience immediate peace and joy in what he believes, and must have a present consciousness that he does so; but though this is an evidence in a man's conscience, so far as it goes, yet it does not distinguish his faith from that of the stony-ground hearers, of whom it is said, that they received the word with *joy*, and for a while *believe*, but in time of temptation

fall away, Matt. xiii. 20, 21. Luke viii. 13.; and therefore something more than this is necessary to prove that he really knows and believes the truth as it is in Jesus. Accordingly, the scripture directs professors to try their faith by its *effects* on their hearts and lives. True faith purifieth the heart, worketh by love, overcometh the world, and produceth good works, particularly the beneficent works of love to the brethren, Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6. 1 John v. 4. James ii. 14, 23.; by these things believers know that they are of the truth, and have passed from death unto life, 1 John iii. 14, 18, 19. and without them all pretensions to faith are vain, 1 John ii. 4, 9. chap. iii. 17. True faith is also permanent; for to *believe unto the saving of the soul*, is opposed to *drawing back unto perdition*, Heb. x. 39. The scripture speaks nothing of one act of faith securing a person's state for ever; but urges believers to hold fast the faith, Col. ii. 6, 7. Heb. x. 23. cautions them against apostacy, Rom. xi. 20, 23. Heb. iii. 12. chap. iv. 1. chap. xii. 25. makes former attainments only an aggravation of guilt in such as draw back, Heb. vi. 4, 7. chap. x. 26, 27. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. and declares that it is he who endureth unto the end that shall finally be saved, Matt. xxiv. 13. Rev. ii. 10. The elect, indeed, shall obtain eternal life, being kept by the power of God unto salvation; but then he keeps them *through faith*, 1 Pet. i. 5. He hath, from the beginning, chosen them unto salvation; but it is *through sanctification of the Spirit*, and *belief of the truth*, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. So that no man can have any present evidence of his own election and final salvation, but in so far as he is holding fast the faith of the gospel, and bringing forth its fruits.

SERMON II.

ON THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

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MATT. xiii. 18—23.

*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

IT is a most important exhortation of our Lord to his disciples, “Take heed how ye hear,” Luke viii. 18. for we must all render an account to him at last respecting the attention we have paid to his word, and the improvement we have made of it.

In this parable our Lord intends the preaching of the gospel with its different effects upon those who hear it, as he himself afterwards explains it to his disciples.

1. The *sower* is Christ himself, by whom the great salvation at first began to be spoken, and was confirmed to us by them who heard him; therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, Heb. ii. 1—4. But this sowing of the word was not confined to his personal ministry; his inspired apostles also preached the gospel to every creature with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Their writings contain the same doctrine; and Christ still continues to sow the seed by the ministry of those who preach the gospel according to these writings; so that this parable answers to every age of the gospel.

2. The *seed* is the *word of the kingdom*, ver. 19. the *word of God*, Luke viii. 11. *i. e.* the gospel, called the incorruptible seed of the word which liveth and abideth for ever, 1 Pet. i. 23. It is quick and powerful, Heb. iv. 12. and not a *dead letter*; for it will accomplish all the ends for which it is sent, either in the salvation or condemnation of men, Isa. lv. 10, 11. It may be called *seed*, as being the principle of regeneration; for men are begotten with the word of truth, Jam. i. 18. and born again of this incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. i. 23. and also because it is of a growing and fruitful nature wherever it is believed and loved.

3. The different grounds or *soils* are the hearts of those who hear the gospel. Four different kinds are here mentioned, which appear to comprise every supposable kind of reception which the gospel meets with among men. Of these four sorts three heard the word without any saving or abiding effect; which is a very

alarming consideration, and ought to stir us up to attend unto the causes of this which Christ here points out; for he tells us elsewhere that many are called, but few are chosen.

4. The difference betwixt these soils are of two kinds. 1. Those which distinguish the bad soils from each other, or among themselves. 2. That which distinguishes the good soil from the bad. With regard to the differences among the bad soils, they are nothing but different modifications of corrupt nature, which assumes various appearances, according to the various tempers, circumstances, habits, interests, and inclinations with which mankind are diversified. It would be strange if religious impressions were not sometimes made upon rational creatures in a natural state, so as to produce some transient effects. These effects may vary in different persons, and in the same persons at different times; but as the root and subject of the whole is the old man, or unrenewed heart, the issue must be equally abortive in all. As to the difference between the good soil and the bad ones, it is a radical, essential, and permanent difference, and falls to be spoken of afterwards. What I would notice here is, that no man's heart is naturally better disposed, or fitter soil than another for receiving the seed of the word. The similitude indeed would lead us to think, that as there are some grounds naturally more rich and fertile than others, so there are some men's minds naturally more susceptible of spiritual impressions, and better disposed to receive the gospel than others are; but all comparisons halt, and must not be strained in every circumstance, but explained by their leading scope. When God looks down upon the sons of men, he finds none righteous, no not one, Rom. iii. 12. He who searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of



men, testifies that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and that the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart are evil, and that continually. It is a sovereign God that makes the difference. It is he that gives the new heart, that creates a clean heart, and renews a right spirit; and this he does by the effectual energy of his Spirit accompanying his word. Thus he opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things spoken by Paul, Acts xvi. 14. and disposed the minds of Cornelius and his kinsmen to attend unto Peter, chap. x. 33. Paul, both by nature and education, had his heart strongly set against the gospel; but the Lord in a day of his power made him receive and retain it in a good and honest heart. There is no more impropriety in saying that the word, accompanied by the Spirit, makes the heart good and honest, so as to bring forth fruit, than in affirming with Peter, that it is both the seed of regeneration, and the food of the new creature, 1 Pet. i. 23. chap. ii. 2.

Having premised these things, I come now to consider more particularly the different kinds of soils, or rather hearers, spoken of in this passage, which are four, *viz.* The way-side—the stony-ground—the thorny-ground—and the good ground.

I. The first kind of soil was that of the *way-side*. “Some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up,” ver. 4. Explained thus: “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the way-side,” ver. 19. Several things are noticeable here; as,

1. The quality of the ground. It is the *way-side*, which



is hard and beaten by the foot of the traveller; a fit emblem of such hearers whose hearts are hard, callous, and insensible to every spiritual impression. Speak to them of their guilt, they are not convicted; of their danger, and they are not alarmed: set before them the remedy, and they have no relish for it, because they neither feel their need of it, nor perceive its suitableness; in short, they are neither suitably awed by threatenings, nor allured by promises. They remain insensible under the awful denunciations of God's wrath, and steeled against all the melting attractives of his love and grace. This is what the scripture calls *hardness of heart*. We see it exemplified in the Jews, both under our Lord's personal ministry, John xii. 40. and that of his apostles, Acts xxviii. 26, 27. "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Here we find a mixture of ignorance, unbelief, obduracy, and perverse obstinacy.

2. As the seed does not sink into the way-side, but lies upon the surface, it becomes an easy prey to the fowls; in like manner, when the word floats in the fancy, and does not sink as an interesting reality into the heart; when it is received only in speculation, and has no influence upon the will and the affections, it soon comes to be forgotten, and every trace of it obliterated; and so our Lord says, "the wicked one cometh, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." This he does, 1. By blinding his mind, that he cannot discern the evidence, suitableness, glory, and excellency of the

gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. and so it is said he *understandeth it not*. 2. By filling the mind with prejudices against it, and aversion to it. Our Lord says to the Jews, “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil,” &c. John viii. 43, 44. 3. By drawing off the attention from it, so that it comes to be eradicated from the very memory. What men do not properly understand and value, they do not retain in their thoughts, or duly ponder and consider. So in this case, they keep not in memory that which is preached unto them, 1 Cor. xv. 2. they give not earnest heed to the things which they have heard, but let them slip, or run out as from a leaking vessel, Heb. ii. 1. being forgetful hearers, Jam. i. 24, 25. So the word preached doth not profit, not being mixed with faith in the hearer; for the devil taketh away the word out of his heart, lest he should *believe* and be saved, Luke viii. 12.

It will perhaps be objected, that if this class of hearers do not understand the word, they cannot be blamed for not believing it, or for their unfruitfulness.

To this it may be answered, that if their not understanding the word, when preached to them, be occasioned by a natural defect in their judgment, or rational faculties, or if the word itself were quite unintelligible to the human understanding, and destitute of all rational evidence of its being a revelation from God; in either of these cases they could not be blamed for not understanding or believing it, it being a natural impossibility: but if they are possessed of the common understanding of men; if the gospel is declared to them in great plainness of speech, together with the evidence by which it is confirmed, then their not understanding the word must be blamable and without excuse, as in that case

the impediment is not so much of a natural as moral kind, or a want of will; for such are represented as having "CLOSED their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts," Matt. xiii. 14, 15. Acts xxviii. 27. So far, then, as the will is concerned in this blindness, it must be culpable, consequently punishable.

When our Lord represents the way-side hearers as *not understanding* the word, he does not mean that they had no kind of knowledge or conception of it at all; for, if that were absolutely the case, how could it be said that the word was *sown in their hearts*? ver. 19. and how could Satan take away the word that was *sown in their hearts*? Mark iv. 15. if in no sense it was ever there? Though the hearts of natural men are under a corrupt bias previous to their hearing the word, yet the will cannot actively either receive or reject it till it is explicitly proposed, and the judgment has obtained some idea of it. The way-side hearers, therefore, must have understood more of the word than they either believed or relished, and consequently were blameable and without excuse. Thus our Lord accounts for the unbelief of the Jews in his time, and shews that it was both inexcusable and punishable; "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved," John iii. 19, 20. He asks the Jews, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" and gives this reason for it, "even because ye cannot hear my words," *i. e.* cannot endure my doctrine, John viii. 43. Again he says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the

works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father," chap. xv. 22, 24. He here supposes a case which would have excused them in not believing on him; but as he had both preached the word to them, and confirmed his testimony by distinguished miracles, he declares that they were left without any excuse for their sin in rejecting him, and shews that it was influenced by their hatred both of him and his Father, which certainly was no rational excuse; for sin can never be an excuse for itself. It may further be observed, that though none will believe in Christ without the supernatural influence of the Spirit, faith being the gift of God; yet the want of this is no excuse for unbelief; because the gospel itself holds forth a sufficient foundation for faith. The unbelieving Jews were not favoured with the saving influence of the Spirit, yet Christ declares that they had no cloak or excuse for their sin.

II. The second kind of soil is the *stony-ground*, "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had not root they withered away," ver. 5, 6. The explanation is this: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended," ver. 20, 21.

The nature of the soil here is stony: some fell upon *stony places*, or upon a *rock*, as in Luke viii. 13. that is, upon a thin layer of earth covering a rock. This soil, when moistened by warm showers, makes the seed spring quicker up than in richer ground; but when the



heat of the sun exhales its moisture, which is soon effected, as there is no deepness of earth to retain it, then the springing grain is scorched and withered in the stalk, and never brings forth proper fruit. This our Lord makes an emblem of such as hear the word, and anon with joy receive it, (immediately receive it with gladness, Mark iv. 16.) yet have they not root in themselves, but dure for a while, (for a while believe, Luke viii. 13.) for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended, (fall away. Luke viii. 18.) On this I remark.

1. That this class of hearers, in several respects, surpass those who are compared to the way-side. The way-side hearers do not *understand* the word of the kingdom, ver. 19. The Greek word *συνιεναι*, which is here rendered *understand*, sometimes signifies *to consider*, as in Ps. xli. 1. cvi. 7. Prov. xxi. 12. Mark vi. 52. Acts xii. 12. but the stony-ground hearers seem to be in some degree enlightened, as appears from its effect upon their minds. The former did not believe what they heard, for the devil took away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe it, Luke viii. 12.; but the latter are said to believe for a while, ver. 13. The first had no impression of, nor affection for what they heard; but the last immediately received it with *joy* and *gladness*, which implies some degree of love to it.

2. By the stony-ground hearers our Lord intends to represent apostates from the faith. This is clear from the account he gives of them as during only for a while—for a while believing—their being afterwards offended or scandalized, and falling away. This is also evident from the cause of their falling away, *viz.* tribulation or persecution because of the word, and which they could not avoid without renouncing the faith, or denying Christ.



3. Though apostacy, in the scripture sense of it, implies men's relinquishing the outward profession of Christianity, and sometimes even their denying or opposing the faith; yet it seldom signifies their throwing off a mere outward and hypocritical profession, which had never been attended with any inward conviction or impression of the truth upon their hearts. The word of God uses pretty strong expressions in describing the attainments of those whom it represents as afterwards falling away, or in danger of it. This will appear if we compare the attainments of the stony-ground hearers with what is said in other passages of scripture

1. It appears that they were in some degree *enlightened* in the knowledge of the truth; for how else could the word of God produce such effects upon them; Paul supposes that men may *understand* all mysteries, and have all *knowledge*, and yet want love, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. He supposes that they may have received the *knowledge of the truth*, and yet afterwards sin wilfully and draw back unto perdition, Heb. x. 26, 39. and that they may have been once *enlightened*, and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, (probably in his miraculous gifts,) and yet finally fall away, chap. vi. 4, 6. Peter speaks of some who, after having *known the way of righteousness*, and escaped the pollution of the world, through the *knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, are again entangled therein and overcome, and return like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, 2 Pet. ii. 20—22.

2. The stony-ground hearers *believed* the word. Our Lord says, "they for a while believe." Instances of this temporary faith we find in several parts of the New Testament. We are told that "many *believed* in his name when they saw the miracles which he did: But Jesus

did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men," John ii. 23, 24. On occasion of one of his discourses with the Jews, it is said, "As he spake these words many *believed on him*;" but we find that they soon changed their mind when he explained himself a little further to them, John viii. 30.—37. When Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, it is said, "Simon himself *believed* also;" but he soon discovered that he was still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, Acts viii. 13, 23. Indeed there can be no such thing, properly speaking, as apostacy from the faith in those who never believed; for how could they make shipwreck of that faith of which they were never possessed? I cannot think that the dreadful sin of apostacy consists in falling off from a mere outward hypocritical profession of faith; for it is certainly more honest to relinquish such a profession than to retain it.

3. The stony-ground hearers received the word with *joy* or *gladness*, ver. 20. Mark iv. 16. We have other instances of this in scripture. It is said of Herod, that "he heard John *gladly*," Mark vi. 20. though he afterwards beheaded him; and of the Jews, that they "were willing for a season to *rejoice* in his light," John v. 35. though they did not receive his testimony concerning Christ. Paul supposes that men may taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and yet fall away irrecoverably, Heb. vi. 4—6. Though a natural man has no real love of holiness, nor hatred of sin as such, yet if he is sensible that he is a sinner, and obnoxious to divine wrath, he may relish the doctrine of the gospel so far as it relates to pardon and deliverance from future punishment, and have some warm emotions of affection, when he thinks of the love of God in giving his Son to die for guilty sinners. It is easy

to conceive how an attentive hearer of the glad tidings of salvation, if he gives any degree of credit to it, may, from a mere natural principle, have joy in such a revelation of mercy to the chief of sinners; at least, it is easier to account for this, than for the want of joy and comfort in real Christians while they are truly believing the gospel, which is a case often supposed.

4. The next thing that claims our attention is the *apostacy* of these stony-ground hearers. This is a most awful subject, but necessary to be attended to by the children of God, that they may not presume upon their own stability, from such impressions and emotions as may be common to them with those who fall away. Little, perhaps, did this class of hearers imagine, when they believed and received the word with joy and gladness, that ever they would lose the impression or relish of it all their lifetime; far less, that any temptation would ever make them entirely to apostatize. Had such a thought been suggested to them they might, perhaps, be ready to reply with Peter, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," Matt. xxvi. 23. But, alas! little did they know of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, or what an hour of temptation, if left to themselves, would produce.

Our Lord says, that "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." The original word *σκανδαλιζομαι* rendered *offended*, does not signify to be provoked to anger, but to stumble or fall. Thus the Lord forbids to "put a stumbling block" (Sept. *σκανδαλον*, a scandal, *i. e.* an occasion of stumbling or falling) before the blind," Lev. xix. 14. This word frequently occurs in the New Testament, and signifies, to stumble or fall off from the

faith. Thus the lusts which are compared to the right eye or hand, are said to scandalize men, when they either hinder them from believing, or make them fall from the faith, and so cause the whole body to be cast into hell, Matt. v. 22—30. Thus Christ himself was a stone of stumbling and rock of scandal to the Jews through their own blind prejudices and corrupt dispositions, 1 Pet. ii. 8. Even Christ's disciples were for a time scandalized at his apprehension and death, as he had foretold them, Matt. xxvi. 31. their faith being almost overset, Luke xxiv. 21. He forewarns them of what they were to suffer for his sake, that they should not be offended or scandalized, John xvi. 1, 2. that is, that they should not be discouraged, or so disconcerted by these sufferings as to fall from the faith. From this we may also learn what it is to offend or scandalize a brother, Rom. xiv. 21. It is to put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his way, ver. 13. so as to endanger his soul, 1 Cor. viii. 11. When, therefore, the stony-ground hearers are said to be *offended* or *scandalized*, it signifies their drawing back from the faith; and so in Luke viii. 13. it is expressed by a synonymous word *αφίστανται* which signifies their *falling away*.

That which occasioned the apostacy of this class of hearers, is said to be tribulation and persecution arising because of the word. Had not tribulation and persecution arisen, they might have probably retained their profession, and gone on very smoothly and decently under the Christian character, without ever being made manifest in this world, as thousands do in times of peace and toleration; or, had tribulation and persecution been upon any other account than “because of the word,” it would have been no temptation to relinquish the faith, but being pointedly directed against the Chris-



tian profession, their fear of present sufferings overcame their faith in Christ and hope of future happiness, and so they were offended and fell away. Christ foretold the influence which this temptation would have upon many of his professed followers, Matt. xxiv. 9—14. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another; *i. e.* they shall not only apostatize from the faith, but turn out treacherous informers against their brethren, and, from mutual distrust and fear of being betrayed, shall hate one another. Our Lord also mentions the influence of false prophets, in turning them aside from the faith: “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” But in opposition to such apostacy, whether occasioned by fear of persecution, or the deceit of error, he adds, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

*Obj.* 1. It will, perhaps, be objected, That if men may believe and have joy in the word, and yet fall away irrecoverably, this will overthrow the doctrine of particular election, and the perseverance of the saints. To this it may be answered,

1. That by the stony-ground hearers our Lord does not intend to represent the elect, consequently their falling away can neither militate against the doctrine of particular election nor the perseverance of the real children of God. The purpose of God according to election must stand, it being not of works, nor of any thing that depends upon the will of man, but of sovereign free grace, Rom. ix. 11. chap. xi. 5, 6. As the elect were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4. so they were given to him to be redeemed, kept, and brought unto glory, John vi. 39. Heb. ii. 10. Accord-



ingly he says, “ I lay down my life for the sheep, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all; and none shall be able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” John x. 15, 28, 29. And being thus kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, they must necessarily persevere unto the end, 1 Pet. i. 5. 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. It is indeed plain from what is said of the stony-ground hearers, and from other passages of scripture, that the gospel does produce very promising effects upon the minds of some, which cannot be distinguished, at least for a time, from real conversion. They may have convictions of sin, be enlightened, taste of the good word of God, receive it with joy, for a while believe, and even possess eminent gifts for the edification of others; and yet after all fall away. But as Christ does not mention these things, however promising, as peculiar to true converts, but as also the attainments of some who fall short of a saving change; therefore, though such should apostatize, it is no proof that any who are really born of God shall ever finally fall away. But then,

2. Though the purpose of election is absolute, and all the elect shall certainly obtain, yet there is no absolute assurance of salvation given to any of the elect themselves, as individuals, independent of their continuing in the faith, love and obedience of the gospel. The apostle knew the election of the believing Thessalonians, not by immediate revelation, nor merely by their “receiving the word at the first with joy of the Holy Ghost,” but by this as connected with its practical effects, “their work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess. i. 3—7. And so he says, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through

sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ;" 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. where we see that their election to glory included in it their faith and holiness, as God's appointed way and means of making them meet for, and bringing them to the enjoyment of it.

3. The most satisfying evidence which the children of God have of their election, while in this imperfect state, does not render the scripture exhortations, admonitions, and even motives to cautious fear useless to them. When they are in heaven they will have no further occasion for these things; but while here, they have an important work assigned them, which requires persevering diligence, and ends not but with their lives: they are also compassed with infirmity, liable to many temptations, and the attacks of spiritual enemies, and so have need to be constantly cautious, vigilant, and active, in fighting the good fight of faith. Therefore, though Paul tells the Thessalonians that he knew their election of God, yet he reckoned it perfectly consistent with this to caution them against being deceived, 2 Thess. ii. 2, 3. and to exhort them to watchfulness, sobriety, holiness, and steadfastness in the faith. 1 Thess. iv. 1—8. chap. v. 6—9. 2 Thess. ii. 15. Peter addresses those to whom he writes as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and speaks highly of their lively hope, their love to Christ, and unspeakable joy even under manifold trials, 1 Pet. i. 2—9. Yet he exhorts them to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, ver. 17, and to give all diligence in adding to their faith the practical exercise of every Christian virtue, to make their calling and election sure; for if they did these things they should never fall, but have an entrance ministered to them

abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. i. 5—12. It is in doing these things that individuals have evidence of their election, and it is while continuing in these things that this evidence is retained and increased; but if they draw back or become barren and unfruitful in the Christian profession, then, whatever former experience or attainments they may have had, they can afford no scriptural evidence of their calling and election. The elect are kept by the power of God unto salvation; but then it is *through faith*, by which they give credit to the motives of fear as well as of hope; and the power of God, by which they are kept, is exerted in giving both their proper effects upon them as their case may require.

*Obj. 2.* It is the promise of the gospel that he that believeth shall be saved; but if persons may really believe for a while, and yet not be saved, how is this promise made good?

*Ans.* The gospel does not promise that such as believe for a while shall be saved. On the contrary, God hath said, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” In oppositton to such it is said, “The just shall live by faith:” He is not only justified by faith without works, but he continues to live by it as the governing principle of his life; so that the life which he now lives in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God. This is to “believe to the saving of the soul,” as opposed to “drawing back unto perdition.” See Heb. x. 38, 39. It is of a most pernicious tendency to flatter persons with the safety of their state, if they can but remember that they once believed and had joy in the gospel, though now the case may be quite otherwise with them, assuring them, that one act of faith saves the soul, that once in Christ always in Christ, and that God is

faithful to the promise he hath made them. But this is to take it for granted that they are elect and not stony-ground hearers, and so is mere assertion without proof. If men are to imagine that their state is safe, independent of their continuing in the faith, and that if they believe for a while, it is impossible for them to come short of salvation, to what purpose are the numerous exhortations to believers to hold fast the faith? Why are they cautioned against apostacy? and why is the dreadful consequences of it so often set before them? Though many professors should fall away, yet God is still faithful to his promise; for he has neither promised that such shall persevere, nor to bestow salvation on apostates. Paul, directing Timothy as to his doctrine, says, "If we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself. Of these things put them in remembrance," 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13, 14.

*Obj.* 3. Such as fall away have never been enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, nor really believed the gospel, but had only professed to believe.

*Ans.* The scripture supposes them to have been once enlightened—to have received the knowledge of the truth, and of the way of righteousness—to have believed for a while—and to have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; see Heb. vi. 4. ch. x. 26. Luke viii. 13. 2 Pet. ii. 20. And their falling away *after* such attainments is that which constitutes the very sin of apostacy, and by which the guilt of it is aggravated; "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them," 2 Pet. ii. 21. Some will admit that such have a kind of



faith, but think that it must be essentially different from that of true believers. Be it so ; but how shall we mark that difference by any thing in faith itself? Does it lie in the *nature* or *manner* of belief? If simple belief admits of any difference either in its nature or manner, we know not what that difference is, and the word of God does not inform us. Or does it lie in the *matter* or *object* of belief? Even in the case of apostates, that is said to be the word of the kingdom—the truth—the way of righteousness—the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; and what other object of faith have true believers ? It has been said that the former always connect some error with the truth which overturns it, and so believe in vain. Perhaps they do ; but unless we know what that error is, we are no nearer the purpose of distinguishing in the first impressions of the gospel, the faith of a stony-ground hearer from that of a true believer.

*Obj.* 4. The scripture informs us, that the first Christians were relieved and comforted by the gospel whenever they believed it ; how shall we account for this if they could not at first distinguish their faith from that of stony-ground hearers, and thereby know their interest in Christ ?

*Ans.* When an awakened sinner first believes the gospel he is immediately relieved and comforted, not by reflecting on any difference which he finds in himself, or in his believing, distinguishing him from other sinners, but purely and directly from what he discovers in the gospel itself, which is glad tidings of great joy to all that really believe it ; for therein Christ, in all his grace and fulness, is held forth for this very purpose, that he might appear as the only, the sure, the free and immediate foundation of a lost sinner's hope as such. Perceiving this free gospel ground of hope, the sinner is



relieved from the fear of wrath, and set at rest from his self-righteous labour to make his peace with God, and has joy and peace in believing that the righteousness finished by the Son of God in his death and resurrection, as the substitute of sinners, is alone sufficient to justify him guilty as he stands. This will account for that immediate comfort and joy with which the first Christians received the gospel. Their joy sprang directly from the gospel itself, and did not depend upon their perceiving at the time any difference between themselves and those who believed for a while. The knowledge of that difference belongs not to the *ground* of a believer's faith and hope in Christ, but to the *evidence* of his being a true believer. The primary evidence of his interest in Christ is his conscious belief and satisfaction in the gospel; but as the stony-ground hearers had, for a time, something like this, the genuine effects of faith on his heart and life are necessary to complete the evidence of his being a child of God. It is in adding to their faith the exercise of every Christian virtue that believers are exhorted to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure;" and that not merely for a while, but "to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end," 2 Pet. i. 5—11. Heb. vi. 11.

Before we conclude this branch of the subject, we shall take notice of three things by which the stony-ground hearers are characterized, consequently distinguished from true believers.

1. Our Lord describes them as *stony-ground*, or a *rock*. The irregenerate heart is frequently described as hard, or of a rocky quality, Ezek. xi. 19. chap. xxxvi. 26. The highest degree of this is compared to the adamant, Zech. vii. 12. which imports the most determined obstinacy in resisting the truth, and in refusing to

comply with the will of God, and such was the character of the self-righteous Pharisees in our Lord's time. But there are others, in whom an habitual and prevailing hardness of heart admits of occasional impressions from the word; and such were the stony-ground hearers, who, though they had some sudden and comfortable impressions in hearing the gospel, yet they were never thoroughly humbled and melted into true penitence and contrition for sin, nor did the love of the truth obtain the ascendancy in their hearts. The rock which constituted the main part of them, and by which their prevailing character is denominated, still remained unchanged; consequently, all the impressions made upon them were but partial, slight, and superficial. Therefore,

2. They *have no root in themselves*. That is, the seed of the word had no root in their hearts. The parable says, "it had not much earth—no depth of earth," Matt. xiii. 5. Mark. iv. 5. which imports that there was a thin covering of earth upon the surface of the rock, but not sufficient to allow the seed to strike its filaments deep enough so as to take firm root. Besides, "it lacked moisture," which was necessary to nourish the seed, Luke viii. 6. These metaphors show, that though they gave a general assent to the word, had some sudden emotions of joy in it, and perhaps formed some good resolutions for the time; yet not having a spiritual discernment of the true excellence of the gospel, it did not take deep root in their hearts, or obtain the chief possession of their affections, so as to become the governing principle in them. This being the case,

3. They "*endure but for a time*." All the impressions made upon them were but temporary, "for when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended," or stumble and fall

away from the faith. These trials discovered that the fear of man was prevalent in their hearts, and made it manifest that their faith was essentially deficient, and that at bottom they had a stronger attachment to this present life and its enjoyments, than to any thing they had discovered in the gospel, notwithstanding all the joy with which they had received it. So that whatever attainments they had, they were not prevalent, consequently could neither be genuine nor permanent ; but this was not discovered till the trial came.

## PART II.

The third kind of soil was a *thorny ground*. “And some fell among thorns ; and the thorns sprang up and choked them,” ver. 7. The explanation is this : “He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful,” ver. 22. Mark iv. 18, 19.

It is not said that this class of hearers fall away, so as to relinquish the outward profession of Christianity like those compared to the stony ground, and therefore may be supposed to persevere in that profession all their lifetime. This, if connected with a conduct tolerably decent, is indeed less shocking than open apostacy ; but while the things of this world have the ascendancy in their hearts, they have less honesty than avowed infidels, and their state is in no respect more safe. That such do not openly give up the profession of the name of Christ, is not owing to any proper root which the word has in them, but to the want of a sufficient temptation or trial. Under this class we may rank the vast number of

nominal Christians who, in times of peace, have a decent form of godliness, but are destitute of the power of it. The thorns which spring up in them and choke the word, are,

1. *The cares of this world.* These may be distinguished into such cares as arise from a state of poverty and the fear of want, and such as arise from avarice, voluptuousness, pride, and ambition.

(1.) When, in a state of poverty, men's minds are distracted and tormented with anxious and distrustful cares about the necessities of life, or as to what they shall eat, what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed; such a state of mind is inconsistent with seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place, and with trusting in God for their daily bread, believing his promise that all these things shall be added unto them. Our Lord, who well knew the sinful nature as well as pernicious effects of anxious and distrustful cares, even as to the necessities of life, dissuades his disciples from giving way to them, and urges this by a variety of arguments well suited to set their minds at rest. See Matt. vi. 25—34. If anxious cares about any of the things of this world were innocent or excusable, surely they would be such as are exercised about the things that are absolutely necessary to our subsistence, such as food and raiment; yet these are the cares which our Lord specifies and condemns as opposite in their nature to faith and trust in God. Such cares must necessarily choke the work and render it unfruitful, not only as they occupy the mind, and draw off the attention from it, but as they involve unbelief and worldly-mindedness in their nature. The word does not profit unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it; and it is not likely that men have faith in God respecting their spi-



ritual concerns, if they cannot trust him for their daily bread. But the distrustful cares which arise from poverty are not the only ones which choke the word; for,

(2.) There are cares which take their rise from avarice, pride, and ambition. If Christians were content with food and raiment, or with such things as they have, as the word of God commands them, 1 Tim. vi. 8. Heb. xiii. 5. the simple demands of nature would be easily satisfied; but the artificial wants of worldly lusts are unlimited, and their demands insatiable, and the cares arising from these are by far more culpable and inexcusable than such as respect the necessities of life. The avaricious, or lovers of money, must necessarily be involved in many cares and anxieties, in forming this and the other scheme for augmenting their fortune and raising themselves in the world, and be also much agitated about the failure or success of these schemes. When making haste to be rich, they plunge themselves into a multiplicity of business, and are entangled in the affairs and hurries of this life, so that their whole thoughts early and late are employed about them; this must be attended with such cares as will effectually choke the word. Nor will affluence when acquired exempt men from the cares of this world; for could we suppose that avarice may be satisfied or extinguished with abundance, (which is seldom the case,) there are other lusts which, in a state of affluence, advance their demands, such as the love of worldly pleasure, ambition, the lust of power, and the various claims of pride and vain honour. These are not only sources of many cares and anxieties, but are themselves directly opposite to the influence of the word and the fruits of the Spirit; but they fall more properly to be considered under the succeeding particulars.



2. Another thing which chokes the word is *the deceitfulness of riches*. Riches are deceitful as promising, while in prospect that happiness, which they never realize when in possession; and when they so far enter into the heart as to excite eager desires after them, these desires tempt men to sin that they may gain them, and to sin again that they may keep them. Paul, writing to Timothy, says, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And in opposition to this he exhorts him, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," 1 Tim. vi. 9—12. which intimates, that the love of money, or a prevailing desire after riches, is subversive of all these christian virtues. It is opposite to *righteousness* or justice, and inclines men to take what advantage they can in their dealings, and often prompts them to acts of fraud and dishonesty; or, if by *righteousness* be meant *liberality*, as it sometimes signifies, Ps. cxii. 9. Matt. vi. 1. 2 Cor. ix. 9, 10. the love of money is the very reverse of it. It is opposite to *godliness*, for covetousness is idolatry, and the service of God and mammon are inconsistent. It is contrary to *faith*, for to trust in uncertain riches is opposed to trusting in the living God, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Or if *faith* here signifies *fidelity* to men, it is contrary to that also, and often leads to betray trust and to act unfaithfully. It is opposite to *love* either to God or our neighbour; for the lust of the eyes is opposed to the love of the Father; it shuts up their bowels of compassion from the needy, and prevents them from doing

to others what they would wish others to do to them in like circumstances. It is also opposite to *patience* and *meekness*, for the covetous heart is restless and impatient to obtain its object, fretful under disappointments, envious at the prosperity of others, and resentful against all who interfere with its wishes. Solomon affirms in general, that "he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent," Prov. xxviii. 20. and the apostle, in stronger terms, lays it down as a maxim universally true, that "the love of money is the root of all evil," 1 Tim. vi. 10. No wonder, then, that it should choke the word where it prevails, and in proportion as it does so.

Yet many are the deceitful pleas which the covetous heart suggests in vindication both of the eager pursuit and accumulation of riches, and by which it comes to assume the semblance of virtue, and would claim sanction from Christianity itself; such as, diligence in business, lawful industry, prudent forethought in laying up to prevent future want; providing for children a sufficiency to set them up in the world, &c. &c. Such pleas, at least some of them, may be admitted in a certain degree; but as coming from a covetous heart, or the love of riches, they are mere deceit. Let such, therefore, as in the sight of God, ask their conscience the following questions: Is my conversation without covetousness, so as to be content with such things as I have? and is my mind set free from anxious care by faith in the promise of God, that he will never leave nor forsake me? Heb. xiii. 5. Is my diligence in business influenced by, and attended with fervency of spirit in serving the Lord, and not mammon? Rom. xii. 11. Is it my governing motive in this diligence to glorify God by being rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; and so to lay up in store for myself a good foundation

against the time to come, that I may lay hold on eternal life, instead of aiming to lay up for myself treasures on earth? 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. As a proof of this, does my liberality actually abound in proportion to the increase of my riches, or the ability which God hath given me? 2 Cor. ix. 8, 11. Do I consider the wealth I possess as not properly my own, but given me in trust by God as his steward? and am I faithfully applying it to the purposes for which he has given it me, in the view of rendering to him an account of my stewardship? Luke xvi. 9—13. Do I put no trust in uncertain riches as a security against future want; but is my trust solely in the living God, who giveth me richly all things to enjoy? 1 Tim. vi. 17. If a man's conscience can give him no satisfying answer to such questions, he has much reason to suspect that all his pleas for increasing his riches are only excuses for his covetousness. Men frequently deceive themselves by separating in idea their *laying up for themselves treasures on earth* from *having their hearts there also*; and their *possessing riches from their trusting in them*; but our Lord seems to connect them in both cases. In the former case they are always connected; in the latter seldom separated, see Matt. vi. 21. Mark x. 24, 25. Besides the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, our Lord mentions,

3. *The lusts of other things*, Mark iv. 19. which I take to be the same with what are termed *the pleasures of this life*, in Luke viii. 14. These are what the apostle John calls "the lust of the flesh," and "the pride of life," and which he opposes to the love of the Father 1 John ii. 15, 16. The *lusts of the flesh* include all unlawful sensual gratifications, such as indulging in gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, voluptuousness, dissipation, and revellings, which are altogether inconsistent with the profession of Christianity, and exclude from

the kingdom of heaven. Even those enjoyments and pleasures of life, which are in themselves the most innocent and lawful, if relished more and pursued with greater eagerness than the things of eternal life, will effectually choke the word, and ruin the soul. Among the lusts of other things must be included, *the pride of life*, or a prevailing ambition after worldly power, pre-eminence, dignity, titles, honour, fame, &c. with all their appendages of pomp and splendor in houses, furniture, equipage, table, and dress. When these things gain the ascendancy in the heart, or so far as they prevail there, they must in the same proportion choke the word; for the love and pursuit of these things are diametrically opposite to the humble, heavenly, and self-denied spirit which is recommended in the gospel. Therefore, in consequence of these various impediments, which are compared to thorns, they “bring no fruit to perfection,” *ὡς τελεσφοροῦσι*, no mature or perfect fruit, Luke viii. 14. They may indeed do many things in themselves good and beneficial, to save their character, or to gratify their pride and ostentation; but these are not the genuine fruits of the gospel, or the work of faith and labour of love, and so are esteemed as no fruit; for both in Matthew and Mark they are represented as *ἀναορπι*, *unfruitful*.

IV. The fourth and last class of hearers are compared to *good ground*. “But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold,” ver. 8. which is thus explained: “But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty,” ver. 23.

What our Lord says of the good ground, in this and



the parallel places, is expressed in such terms as evidently to form a contrast to what has been said of the three foregoing classes of hearers. This will appear more clearly as we proceed.

1. They are said not only to hear the word, but to *understand* it. “He that receiveth seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and *understandeth* it.” By this they are distinguished from the way-side hearers who understand it not, ver. 19.; and though the stony and thorny-ground hearers have some understanding of the word, such as natural men may have, and be even possessed of such gifts as may be useful in edifying others; yet they do not perceive it in the same light, nor receive it upon the same evidence that true believers do. It may indeed be difficult to shew what it is that the latter understand of the word which the former do not, or what different ideas they have of the gospel, as the scriptures mark that difference, not so much in the sentiments of the mind abstractedly considered, as by their effects on the heart and life: but as the good-ground hearers are distinguished here from the other classes by their *understanding* the word, they must certainly have some ideas or conceptions of it in their mind, which others have not, though hearing the same things, or using the same expressions.

It is a doctrine clearly taught in the scriptures, that none have a true understanding of the gospel, but such as are taught of God by the special illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. We are expressly told, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. ii. 14. The *natural* (animal or sensual) *man* does not signify merely a man in the rude state of nature,



whose faculties have not been cultivated by study, learning, or society ; nor one who is entirely destitute of all religion. The apostle takes his natural man from among such as the world held in the highest repute for their natural parts, learning, and religion, such as the learned Jewish scribes and doctors of the law, chap. i. 22, 23, and the Greek philosophers who sought after wisdom. These are they whom he terms the wise, the scribes, the disputers of this world, ver. 20, 23. To the one the preaching of Christ crucified was a stumbling block ; to the other foolishness, ver. 23. They did not discern the wisdom nor the power of God in it, and so did not know and receive the things of the Spirit of God. All their wisdom and knowledge served rather to blind and prejudice their minds against the gospel than to assist them in understanding it ; while, on the other hand, many of those who, in respect of such wisdom and worldly advantages, were the foolish, the weak, the base and despised, were made to understand the word both unto their own salvation and the benefit of others, ver. 26—30. This spiritual understanding is promised to all the subjects of the new covenant : “ They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest,” Jer. xxxi. 34. Heb. viii. 11. This is the same with the promise made to Zion ; “ All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children,” Isa. liv. 13. and this divine teaching is the Father’s drawing men unto Christ, without which they cannot come unto him, John vi. 44, 45. “ He hath, says the apostle, given us an understanding that we may know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ,” 1 John v. 20. Our Lord, contemplating the sovereignty of God in

revealing the truth to some in distinction from others, “rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,” Luke x. 21. From all which it appears, that it is divine illumination which makes the difference between such hearers of the word as understand it in its true light, and those who do not so understand it, and is not owing to any natural capacity or wisdom which one man may possess more than another: on the contrary, it often happens in the sovereign dispensation of divine grace, that

He calls the fool, and makes him know  
The mysteries of his grace,  
To bring aspiring wisdom low,  
And all its pride abase.

I know that this will not satisfy reasoners. They want to know what particular truth or sentiment is communicated to the mind by the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, and which unenlightened men can have no idea of. In answer to this it ought to be observed, that it is not pleaded that any truth or sentiment is communicated to the mind by the Spirit, besides what is already clearly revealed in the word; and the illumination of the Spirit is to make men perceive and understand that revelation which is already given in its true light. But as to what that true light is, no man by any form of expression can effectually communicate that to his neighbour, any more than he can give him a spiritual discernment, which would be to perform the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit. We may, however, observe,

(1.) That the hearers who are compared to the good ground, understand or perceive the gospel to be in reality *the word of God*, and so receive it as such upon its own proper evidence. The apostle, in 1 Thess. ii. 13. says, “ For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” This may be reckoned a common thing in a country where the divine authority of the scriptures is generally acknowledged ; but nothing can be a greater mistake. Multitudes indeed have a kind of general and implicit belief that the gospel is the word of God ; they see it is the commonly received opinion, and they have had that notion instilled into them from their earliest years, and therefore never questioned it ; but they have never yet had their understanding enlightened so as to perceive it themselves to be indeed the word of God. Others may have looked into the external evidence of the gospel, such as prophecies with their fulfilment, and miracles, (which indeed leave men inexcusable in their unbelief,) and they may yield such a rational assent to those things as they do to any other credible facts recorded in ancient history, while after all, they neither properly understand the gospel itself, nor receive it with that faith which is due to the testimony of God. But when a man is by divine teaching made to understand the word, he sees it in a light which he never did before, and finds that it carries its own evidence along with it of its being a revelation from God, and that by far more convincing and satisfying, than all the deductions of human reasoning, or the persuasable words of man’s wisdom. God makes himself manifest to him as the speaker in the word, and so

he receives it not as the word of man, but on the authority of God himself; and thus it comes to him "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance," 1 Thess. i. 5. So that his faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Cor. ii. 5.

(2.) Those who understand the word perceive the divine excellency of the scheme of redemption through a crucified Saviour. They had, perhaps, often before heard and read the doctrine of the gospel concerning the death and resurrection of Christ; but being ignorant of the true character of God, the just demands of his law, and insensible of their own state and character as being helpless, guilty, and condemned sinners in his sight, they had no relish for such doctrine, saw neither the wisdom nor power of God in it, and often thought that it was too much insisted on; and with regard to the sovereignty of divine grace they could not endure it. But now they perceive the scheme of redemption to be every way worthy of God. The doctrine of Christ crucified, which the natural man esteems weakness and foolishness, appears to them peculiarly glorious, as displaying the power of God, and the wisdom of God, and in which they discover his infinite holiness and justice in the punishment of sin, and at the same time the riches of his mercy and grace in pardoning and saving the guilty. Hence they count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and desire to glory in nothing else save in his cross. In short, they discover in the work of redemption, so far as they are enlightened, a more perfect, consistent, and satisfying display of the character of the true God, especially of his moral perfections, than in all his other works and ways; for by this means God shines in their hearts to



give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(3.) Those who understand the word perceive in it what is sufficient to pacify their guilty conscience, and furnish them with a ground of good hope towards God, and so find relief purely in believing that truth which it openly testifies to all without difference. Before this, they were always looking for ease to their minds through the medium of some gracious change they were to discover in themselves, or by some work or exercise they were to perform to fit them for Christ and warrant their claim to, and trust in him; but they had not the least idea that they could find relief directly and solely from what the gospel testifies concerning Christ. But now they discover in the gospel a free, complete, and all-sufficient remedy provided by God himself, and every way suited to their case as guilty lost sinners. They see and believe that the work finished by the Son of God as the voluntary substitute of the guilty for whom he died, and which was declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead, is alone sufficient for their pardon and acceptance with a holy and righteous God, however guilty they are. By this faith they are justified, not by working, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. and being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, chap. v. 1.

These are some of the things, which, though clearly revealed in the word, none can properly understand or believe, but such as are taught of God. They do not receive the gospel upon its proper evidence as the word of God who cannot lie; they do not perceive his glorious character shining in it, nor do they understand how it can relieve the guilty conscience and give peace



with God. But the good ground hearers understand the word in these respects, and consequently love it.

2. Another thing whereby they are distinguished from the rest is, that “they, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, *keep it*,” Luke viii. 15. An honest and good heart is a sincere, upright, and loving heart. Some would argue from the words thus arranged, that their hearts were honest and good *previous* to their hearing the word; but in this they are greatly mistaken. The heart is not naturally honest and good, nor can it be so previous to regeneration, which is by means of the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23. It cannot be honest and good previous to faith which purifies the heart; but faith cometh by hearing the word of God, Rom. x. 17. We have already seen that the class under consideration did *hear* the word and *understand* it; which must have produced in them an honest and good heart, and so accounts for it. The words in Luke do not say that they heard the word with an honest and good heart, as if that had been the state of their heart previous to their hearing the word, but that, “having heard the word, they, in an honest and good heart, (κατεχουσι) keep it,” or retain and hold it fast, in opposition to their letting it slip. By this they are distinguished from the way-side hearers, out of whose hearts Satan caught away the word; and also from the stony-ground hearers, who believe only for a while, but in time of temptation fall away. In opposition this, they not only receive the word with joy, but retain it. They keep it in memory, 1 Cor. xv. 2. It abides in them, John xv. 7. dwells in them richly in all wisdom, Col. iii, 16. They hold fast the beginning of the confidence and the rejoicing of hope stedfast unto the end, Heb. iii. 6. They continue grounded and settled in the faith, Col. i. 23. and so are

rooted and grounded in love, Eph. iii. 17. Thus the incorruptible seed of the word of God remaineth in them, and they cannot sin, so as to draw back unto perdition, because they are born of God, 1 John iii. 9. They endure unto the end, and at last receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. Yet I apprehend that their perseverance is not owing to the abiding nature of any principle of grace conferred on, or inherent in them; but to the continued influence of the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God, by which the elect are kept through faith unto salvation. It is on this, and not on the permanent nature of any present attainment, or grace already received, that the Christian's hope of perseverance must rest.

3. Lastly, They are distinguished from the other classes of hearers by their being fruitful: "They bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, some an hundred," Mark iv. 20. There are fruits of the Spirit, which consist of holy tempers and dispositions of heart, Gal. v. 22, 23, and without these the most plausible outward appearances are of no avail in the sight of God who trieth the heart and reins; so that though a man should speak with the tongues of men and angels, possess the most extraordinary gifts, give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned as a martyr, these things will be of no advantage to him unless they spring from an inward principle of love to God and man, 1 Cor. xiii. 1—4. There are also outward visible fruits which spring from faith and love, and consist of holy practice and good works. These are the fruits which seem to be chiefly intended here, and which distinguish true believers from false professors; for our Lord says, "by their fruits ye shall know them," Matt. vii. 20. If men are destitute of the practical fruits of

the gospel, the scripture puts a negative upon all their pretensions to faith, love, spiritual enjoyments, &c. see Luke vi. 46. James ii. 17, 20, 26. ch. i. 22—24. 1 John ii. 4. ch. iii. 17. ch. iv. 20. But as true believers shew their faith by their works, James ii. 18. their love to God by keeping his commandments, 1 John ii. 5. ch. v. 3, and their love to the brethren by expressing it, not in word or in tongue only, but in work and in truth, ch. iii. 18. so they hereby know that they have passed from death unto life, that they are of the truth, and shall assure their hearts before God, ver. 14, 10. No professor has any certain criterion by which he can distinguish, or form a decided judgment of his religious impressions, but by their fruits or practical effects. It is by this criterion that they are distinguished in the parable of the sower. Neither the stony nor thorny-ground hearers brought forth any true fruit, as did the good-ground hearers.

These last “bring forth fruit with patience,” Luke viii. 15. This patience has a respect to two things, their present sufferings and their future reward. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in some shape or other; so that their bringing forth fruit must be accompanied with the exercise of patience under the various trials they have to endure. We have an example of this in the believing Macedonians, who “in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality,” 2 Cor viii. 2. The Hebrews also, after they were illuminated, endured a great fight of affliction; yet they had compassion of the apostle in his bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance, Heb. x. 32—35. When

Christians persevere in holding fast the faith and the profession of it, and continue stedfast and unmoveable always abounding in the work of the Lord, notwithstanding all the reproaches and afflictions they may have to endure from a wicked world and false professors on that account, that is to bring forth fruit with patience. And hereby they are distinguished both from the stony and thorny-ground hearers. The belief and joy of the former did not support them under tribulations and persecution because of the word, and so they did not persevere, but were offended and fell away. And as for the latter, the influence of the word was choked in them by worldly cares and lusts, so that they brought forth no fruit to perfection; and in both of them the love of this present life, and the enjoyments of it, had still the ascendancy over the love of God and the things of eternal life.

I noticed that patience has also a respect to the future reward. It is a patience influenced by the hope of obtaining the heavenly inheritance at Christ's second coming. The apostle, writing to the Hebrews says, "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath so great recompence of reward; for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." Heb. x. 35, 36. It is a patient waiting for Christ, 2 Thess. iii. 5. and is that patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ which is connected with the work of faith and labour of love, 1 Thess. i. 3. James speaking of the covetousness, injustice, and cruelty of the rich towards the just, thus exhorts Christians: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be



ye also patient ; stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James v. 7, 8.

Though they are all fruitful, yet they do not all produce a like quantity of fruit : they " bring forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty." The children of God have not all the same measure of light, and of grace : they have not all the same number of talents entrusted to them, nor privileges conferred upon them : they have not all the same degree of growth and strength in the spiritual life. Some are weak in the faith, others strong ; and so they are distinguished into little children, young men, and fathers, 1 John ii. 12—15. This diversity will account for their inequality as to the quantity of fruit ; but it must be observed, that those who bring forth fruit, in proportion to the measure of the talents and grace conferred, will be accepted whether that be more or less. He who gained two talents was equally approved with him that gained five, Matt. xxv. 23. and the widow's two mites, which did not amount to a farthing, were greatly preferable in the sight of God to the disproportionate offerings of the rich out of the superfluity of their abundance, Luke xxi. 1—5.

From this parable we may learn,

1. That the word may produce some very promising effects on the minds of hearers, which yet do not amount to true conversion or a saving change. This is clear from the case of the stony-ground hearers, who for a while believed, and received the word with joy. Many deceive themselves by trusting to such occasional impressions and emotions as they have experienced in hearing the word. On these they ground the assurance of their salvation ; and even when these impressions are gone, they comfort themselves with the recollection that they had once experienced them, and that therefore



their state is safe, and they can never fall away finally ; for that God is unchangeable in his love to them, and faithful to his promise. Mistakes of this kind are exceedingly dangerous and hurtful. They tend to foster spiritual pride and presumption, fortify the mind against the scripture motives to watchfulness and cautious fear, and so lull men into a fatal security even when falling away, and must, at any rate, slacken all diligence to make their calling and election sure.

2. We may also learn from this parable, That it will not profit us to be hearers of the word, unless it bring forth fruit in us. Of four classes of hearers none but one of them brought forth fruit to perfection, and that class only is denominated *good ground*. Many place the most of their religion in being hearers of the word ; they regularly attend the places of public worship, or perhaps run from place to place, not to worship, but to hear a variety of sermons. They, perhaps, may find some entertainment or gratification in this ; but not that of the children of God, who desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby. They come nearer the description given of old Israel, of whom it is said, “ They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them ; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument ; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.” Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32. In like manner many professors hear Christ’s sayings, but do them not, and so are compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand, Matt. vii. 26. They rest satisfied with having performed the duty of hearing, or

perhaps with some temporary impressions made upon them at the time ; but this is all their religion, they have nothing more in their plan, no further end in view ; not once reflecting, that hearing is not itself an *end*, but only the *means* to promote an end, viz. growth in grace, and fruitfulness in practical religion.

Let us therefore, brethren, beware of deceiving ourselves in this important matter, or of resting satisfied with being mere hearers or talkers about religion, or even with inward impressions and comfortable frames and feelings ; but let us seriously attend to the apostle James's exhortation, " Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," and " let us shew out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom." And if we are not forgetful hearers, but doers of the work of faith and labour of love, we shall undoubtedly be blessed in our doing, James i. 22, 25, ch. iii. 13.

## SERMON III.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE GRACE.

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EPH. ii. 8, 9, 10.

For by grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast ; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

THE GRACE of GOD is his sovereign, free, and unmerited favour towards guilty sinners of mankind, as exercised and revealed in the gospel plan of salvation. It supposes the objects of it to be in a lost and fallen state, to be destitute of all moral worthiness, and to be liable to the wrath to come as the just punishment of their sins ; and it is the original spring and self-moving cause of their deliverance from that state ; “ *For*, says the apostle, *by grace are ye saved.*” Those who are insensible to their guilty, depraved, and helpless situation by nature, and are not convinced that they justly deserve the threatened punishment, can neither perceive nor relish the grace here spoken of. It pays no regard to any supposed worth in one man more than another ; but views the whole mass of mankind upon a level, as having all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

It rejects the claims of the self-righteous, whilst it reaches the case of such as are dead in trespasses and sins, and are by nature the children of wrath even as others, ver. 1—3.

As salvation by grace is freely conveyed to sinners by means of the gospel report or testimony, and as there is no way of receiving what is thus conveyed but by believing that testimony; so the apostle informs us, that salvation by grace is *through faith*: and lest it should be thought that this faith originates in ourselves, or from any principle or good disposition naturally in us, he adds, *and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*: for it is *through grace* that men believe, Acts xviii. 27. and it is given them in the behalf of Christ to believe on him, Philip. i. 29. So that faith whereby they receive salvation is equally of grace with salvation itself.

Salvation being of grace through faith is opposed to its being of works. *Not of works, lest any man should boast*. If salvation were obtained by works, it would be reckoned a reward, not of grace, but of debt, Rom. iv. 4. and so would give occasion for boasting of these works as if they were worthy of the reward: but as it is of grace through faith; as righteousness is imputed to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, ver. 5. so boasting is entirely cut out and excluded by the law of faith, Rom. iii. 27. To show that salvation is not procured by works, the apostle further adds, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*. Unbelievers can perform no works truly good and acceptable in the sight of God, that may be supposed to obtain his favour; for it is declared of all mankind in their natural state, that “there is none that doeth good, no not one,” Rom. iii.

12. and that “without faith it is impossible to please God,” Heb. xi. 6. And as for those good works which believers perform, they are the *effects* of their being created in Christ Jesus unto them, and not the *cause* of the grace of God towards them. They are the works of the faith and love of those who are already justified by grace.

It will, perhaps, be said, that as neither faith nor good works can *merit* salvation, nor in the least *profit* God as a man may be profitable to his neighbour Job. xxii. 3. ch. xxxv. 7, 8. Rom. xi. 35. and as neither faith nor works are *of ourselves*, one being the gift of God, the other the effect of his creating us in Christ Jesus unto them, which excludes all cause of boasting, 1 Cor. iv. 7. therefore, whether we are saved through faith or works, or both, it makes no difference; it may still be said that by grace we are saved.

But though it is true that neither faith nor works merit salvation, and that they are not of ourselves, but effects of God's grace; yet it is not chiefly on these accounts, that the apostle says, “by grace are ye saved;” for if that had been all that he meant by grace, then salvation by grace would have been equally by works as by faith; but this he constantly denies, and affirms, that it is *through faith*, and *not of works*; nay, that it is of faith, that it might be by grace, Rom. iv. 16. and he opposeth works to grace in this matter, as being altogether inconsistent with it: “If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work,” Rom. xi. 6. If therefore the salvation of sinners were in any respect obtained by works, whether performed in their own strength or by divine assistance, it would neither be of *grace* nor *faith*

in the sense in which the apostle here uses these words. To know the true grace of God is of the last importance, and therefore it may, through the blessing of God, be useful to take a more particular view of this delightful subject, as it is revealed in the gospel. The method we propose is to consider,

- I. Its chief steps or actings in the plan of redemption.
- II. Its peculiar and distinguishing properties. And,
- III. Point out some of the causes of men's opposition to it.

I. We are to take a view of divine grace in its chief steps or actings towards men in the plan of redemption.

1. The scripture abundantly testifies, that all the successive steps of divine grace in time, are "according to God's eternal purpose (*προθεσιν των αιωνων*) which he purposed in Christ Jesus," Eph. iii. 11. This purpose was altogether sovereign, gracious and free. It was not influenced by any motive or cause without himself; but is described to be "the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 5.—"his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself," ver. 9.—"the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," ver. 11. It is opposed to any work or goodness in its objects: "Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. It is a particular, determinate, fixed and unalterable purpose, which will infallibly obtain all its ends. See Ps. xxxiii. 11. Prov. xix. 21. Isa. xlvi. 10, 11. Heb. vi. 17. Now this eternal purpose includes the whole plan of divine grace, respecting the salvation of men, which existed in the mind of God before any of them had a being. As,

(1.) His *foreknowledge* of his people. The apostle speaking of those who are the called according to his purpose, represents them as having been foreknown; "For whom he did (*προεγνων*) FOREKNOW, them he also did predestinate," Rom. viii. 29. This was not a *general* foreknowledge, but a *particular distinguishing* one, as both the form of the expression, and the context shows. The apostle is not speaking of *all*, but of *some*. Nor does it mean, that he foreknew they would be more *deserving* of his grace than others; for this would contradict his verdict of the whole human race, Rom. iii. 10. and the express declaration, "that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," ver. 23. This foreknowledge respected them as fallen and guilty, and so as objects of pure *mercy* and *grace*, not of *reward*. He could therefore foresee no good in them, but what was to come from himself. *Knowing*, in scripture, often signifies *special favour* and *good-will*, see Exod. xxxiii. 17. John x. 14, 15. and God's *foreknowing* his people is evidently used in this sense, Rom. xi. 2.

(2.) His eternal purpose also includes his *election* or *choice* of his people. So he is said to have "chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4. and they are termed "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." 1 Pet. i. 2. The very meaning of the word imports something distinguishing and particular. It signifies to *select* or *chuse out* some from a common mass of the same kind; but where all without distinction are taken, there is no proper election or choice made. This is not an election to be God's people merely in respect of *outward profession* and *privileges*, for those who had such a profession and enjoyed these privileges are exhorted to make

their election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. Nor is it an election to some *particular work* or *office*; for the most of those who are termed *elect*, had no such election. The scripture expressly declares, that it is an *election unto salvation*, 2 Thess. ii. 13. Nor does it mean an election on account of any *good works*, either done, or foreseen to be done by its objects; for it is declared to be “not of works, but of him that calleth,” Rom. ix. 11. It is termed an *election of grace*, which the apostle states in direct opposition to its being of works; “And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.” Rom. xi. 5, 6.

Faith, holiness, and good works are represented as the *effects* of election, not the *cause* of it: so they are said to be “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Rom. viii. 29.—to be “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love,” Eph. i. 4.—to be “chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” 2 Thess. ii. 13.—and as to good works, they are said to be “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them.” Eph. ii. 10.

(3.) The divine purpose also takes in his *predestination* of his people. The apostle clearly places this before their calling: “Moreover, whom he (προωρισε) did predestinate, them he also called. Rom. viii. 30. The word signifies to *fore-appoint*, or *pre-ordain* to some end or purpose; and the elect are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,” which imports, conformity to his image in holiness, Col. iii. 10. and conformity to him in his glory, which is termed “bearing the image of the heavenly man.” 1 Cor. xv. 49. They

are predestinated to be conformed to him as “the first-born among many brethren;” which agrees with Eph. i. 5. “Having predestinated us unto the *adoption of children* by Jesus Christ unto himself;” and they are also predestinated unto the inheritance of God’s children; “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” ver. 11. No words can more clearly express the sovereignty and freedom of grace in predestination, than to say, it is “according to the good pleasure of his will,” ver. 5.—“according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,” ver. 11.

Thus we see that divine grace was exercised before the world began, in foreknowing, electing, and predestinating a certain number of the fallen race unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, to whom they were given to be redeemed, and brought unto glory, John x. 29. Heb. ii. 10, 13. Accordingly, Christ claims a property in them before they are called; while they were yet idolatrous heathens he says of them, “other sheep I HAVE which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice,” John x. 16.; and he encourages Paul to preach the gospel at Corinth by this argument, “for I HAVE much people in this city,” Acts xviii. 10.

2. Another amazing step of divine grace, (and which is indeed the highest expression of it, and the channel of all the succeeding steps,) was God’s sending his only begotten Son into the world to *redeem his elected people* by his obedience unto death. This was in prosecution of his eternal purpose; for Christ “was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,” to this work, 1 Pet. i. 20. He was *sent* by the Father, and received a commandment from him to lay down his life

for the sheep, John x. 17, 18. and therefore he came to do his will in this respect, Heb. x. 7, 10. It is by giving his own Son unto the death for his guilty people, that his love and grace is every where set forth and illustrated. Herein he "commends his love towards us," Rom. v. 8. "Herein we perceive the love of God," &c. 1 John iii. 16. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us," &c. chap. iv. 9. Will any be so bold as to deny that this was purely of rich, free, and unmerited grace? Will they venture to affirm, that any of the human race deserved such favour either in an absolute or qualified sense? If they do, they stand clearly refuted by the word of God, which declares, that those for whom Christ died were neither righteous nor good, but *without strength, enemies* and *ungodly*, Rom. v. 6, 8, 10. and it is because they were such, that he had any occasion to die for them. This gives us a view of the true grace of God; and from this we must form our judgment of all the other effects of it, which flow to us from the same grace of God by which Christ tasted death for all the children which God hath given him, Heb. ii. 9, 10, 13.

Yet many there are who plainly shew their aversion to this wonderful display of divine grace, and endeavour all they can to derogate from it. 1. By exalting man's natural powers, and extenuating the guilt and misery of his fallen state; and so in a great measure set aside his need of such grace. 2. By denying the *divine dignity* of the Saviour, in the gift of whom this grace appears in its highest magnitude. 3. By denying his *atonement*, or the doctrine of the cross, which is the main subject of the gospel, the most amazing display of grace reigning through righteousness, and the foundation of the believer's hope and glorying.

Others who admit the atonement deny its *particular design* and *infallible effect*. They hold it to be only a general expedient for the redemption of *all* mankind, or to give them a chance for life; but not for the certain and effectual salvation of *any*. They suppose that the most of those for whom he died may perish notwithstanding, and that the benefit of it hinges entirely upon the capricious or fortuitous turn of the human will. Salvation, however, "is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Rom. ix. 16. Christ did not die in vain, or at a mere uncertainty as to who should be saved by his death, or whether any should be saved by it or not. He had the promise that he should see his seed—see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," Isa. liii. 10, 11. and he promises to give his sheep for whom he died eternal life, and that they shall never perish, John x. 28. The design of God in making him perfect through sufferings, was to bring the many sons for whom he suffered unto glory, Heb. ii. 10. If Adam's once offence was sufficient to bring certain death on all his posterity, can it be reasonably supposed that the obedience of the Son of God will fail of its end in any one instance, or be less efficacious and infallible in obtaining and securing eternal life for all those for whom he died? No; that grace which gave Christ to die for the ungodly stands on no precarious ground. It depends not on any supposed self-determining power of man's will, nor does it, through any impediment whatever, stop short of its purpose, but greatly abounds over sin and all its effects, and reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. v. 20, 21. The death of Christ was intended for the benefit of all those who were foreknown, elected, and predestinated to eternal life, and in their salvation it will most certainly obtain its end.

3. Another step of the grace of God is his *effectually calling* his people to the faith and enjoyment of the blessings of redemption. The scripture speaks of the *universal call* of the gospel to all men; but this is not inseparably connected with salvation; for Christ says, that in this sense "many are called, but few chosen," Matt. xxii. 14. But the scripture also speaks of a *calling* which is effectual, such as is connected with election and final glorification; for it is said, "Whom he did predestinate them he also called, justified, and glorified," Rom. viii. 30. Paul speaking of the vessels of mercy, whom God had afore prepared unto glory, describes them as the *called* of Jews and Gentiles, Rom. ix. 24. This calling is more than the outward ministry of the word which is common to *all* that hear it. It is more than some of its partial and temporary effects upon *many* that hear it; and is always ascribed unto God's making his word effectual by the influences of his Holy Spirit. The outward means may be proposed to the best advantage, but it is God who giveth the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. It is he that opens the heart, Acts xvi. 14. "No man can come unto Christ, except the Father draw him," John vi. 44. We are saved by grace through faith, and that faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. for it is given to us in the behalf of Christ, to believe on him, as well as to suffer for his sake, Philip. i. 29. It is God that gives the new heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. that puts his law in it, Jer. xxxi. 33. and that saves his people, not by works of righteousness which they have done, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Tit. iii. 5. Thus the same grace that elected them, and gave Christ to die for them, is exerted in

their effectual calling and regeneration, and without this they would still remain dead in trespasses and sins ; and this grace has been exemplified upon the most wicked characters, while the more decent and sober have remained in unbelief.

Those whom God thus calls according to his purpose, and are brought to believe in Christ, he also justifies, Rom. viii. 30. *i. e.* he frees them from condemnation, freely pardons all their sins, and accepts of them into a state of favour and reconciliation. They are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24. for they “ have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,” Eph. i. 7. This justification is by faith exclusive of all works of ours. It is to him that worketh not, to be justified, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, through the work already finished by the Son of God, that righteousness is imputed, Rom. iv. 5. and so it is received by faith alone, which is the gift of God. And being thus justified by faith, they have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ ; they are relieved from the fear of wrath, and reconciled to him, having received the atonement. God having purified their hearts by faith, their faith works by love, and being made free from the guilt and service of sin, they become servants to God, and have their fruit unto holiness, Rom. v. 1, 11. chap. vi. 22. Thus their justification and begun sanctification is included in their calling, and both are according to God’s eternal purpose of grace ; for they are called with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9. And they were

chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love, Eph. i. 4.

4. Another step of the grace of God is his *preserving his people in the faith*, and not suffering them totally and finally to fall away. Many professors indeed apostatize and fall away from very promising appearances, which, while they continued, we could not distinguish from the effects of the true grace of God; and this affords ground for much caution and self-jealousy to the elect themselves, who must not be high-minded or self-confident, but fear, Rom. xi. 20. But this is not a fear that the elect shall fall away, but lest they themselves should turn out not to be of that number; for while they are in this world, they are not so absolutely assured of their own particular election, as to supersede all cautious fear, or to have no further occasion for giving diligence to make their calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. Even the elect themselves are not secured against partial declines and backslidings, which ought to alarm them in the most serious manner; and this alarm, on such occasions, is one of the very means of their recovery; it is an ingredient of the fear of God which he puts in their hearts, that they may not totally and finally depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. It must further be granted, that the elect would finally fall away if left to themselves. Such is the power and craft of their spiritual enemies, and the influence of temptations; and such is their own weakness and remaining corruption, that they would soon make shipwreck of the faith, and draw back unto perdition. Indeed, upon this supposition, none could be saved, unless we were to suppose that some have sufficient power of themselves to persevere, which the word of God denies, declaring that it is God alone that is able

to keep them from falling, Jude, ver. 24. and directing them to apply to him for grace to help in time of need, Heb. iv. 16.

But however many professors of the faith may fall away from that profession, by which they were justly entitled to our charitable regards as elect, and whatever cautions are given to the real elect in common with other professors; yet it is a clear scripture doctrine, that all those who are ordained to eternal life, not only believe, Acts xiii. 48. John vi. 37. but are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,” 1 Pet. i. 5.

The churches of Christ are addressed according to the truth of their profession, and styled *elect, called saints*, and *the sanctified in Christ Jesus*; and agreeably to this charitable judgment of their state, Paul frequently expresses his confidence that they shall persevere unto the end. This confidence he grounds not on their own strength or stability, nor even on the permanent nature of any inherent grace already bestowed on them; but on the power and faithfulness of God, and on the evidence he had of the divine purpose in their calling. To the saints at Corinth he writes, “God shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,” 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. To those at Philippi he says, “I thank my God, upon every remembrance of you, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ,” Philip. i. 3—7. And for the saints at Thessalonica he prays, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit,

and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ;" adding, " Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. Again, he says, " But the Lord is faithful, who will stablish you, and keep you from evil," 2 Thess. iii. 3.

From these passages it appears, that the *faithfulness* of God is engaged to establish those whom he hath called according to his purpose, and to make them persevere unto the end, which implies that he had promised this ; and there are many promises to this effect. The Lord says, " I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. Christ promises to give unto his sheep eternal life, and that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand, John x. 28. Every promise of their final salvation imports their being kept by the power of God unto it, 1 Pet. i. 5. The apostle states an inseparable connection between God's foreknowing, predestinating, calling, justifying, and his glorifying his people, which necessarily includes their perseverance, Rom. viii. 29—31. and upon this ground, together with Christ's dying, rising again, and interceding for them, he triumphs in the full persuasion, that no person, event or thing, present or future, however adverse and afflicting, shall ever be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, ver. 31—39. The perseverance of the elect, therefore, does not depend upon their own natural wisdom, will or strength, but upon the immutability of God's purpose, power, and faithfulness, the efficacious atonement and intercession of Christ, and the continued

supply of grace to help in time of need, Heb. vi. 17. 1 Pet. i. 5. Rom. viii. 33, 34. Heb. iv. 16.

5. The last and consummating step of divine grace is God's putting his elect in *possession of eternal glory*; for whom he foreknew, predestinated, called, and justified, them he also GLORIFIED, Rom. viii. 30. And this is the final result of all the previous steps of divine grace with respect to them. They are *chosen* unto salvation, 2 Thess. ii. 13. *Predestinated* unto the inheritance, Eph. i. 11. *Called* to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 14. *Justified* by his grace, that they should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, Tit. iii. 7. and they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, or justification, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ; for grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. v. 17, 21. They are *made meet* for being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i. 12. and *afore prepared* unto glory, Rom. ix. 23. Thus we see that all the previous steps of divine grace had, next to the glory of God, the eternal glorification of the elect for their end and object; and if this end were not effectually attained, and infallibly secured, the whole plan of divine grace would be frustrated. But this is impossible; for God from everlasting has absolutely purposed to bestow eternal life upon his elect; and his counsel is immutable, and shall stand, Isa. xlv. 10, Rom. ix. 11. Heb. vi. 17. He has promised it before the time of ages, and he cannot lie, Tit. i. 2. He sent his Son into the world to redeem by his blood those whom he had given him, and bring them to glory, Heb. ii. 10. and it is the Father's will who sent him, that of all which he hath given him, he should lose

nothing, but should raise it up at the last day, John vi. 39. He calls them by his grace, and effectually draws them to Christ by divine teaching, making them willing in the day of his power, ver. 44, 45. Psal. cx. 3. and as he keeps them by his power through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5. so all Christ's sheep must undoubtedly obtain eternal life; for none can pluck them out of his hand, John x. 28. Thus we see that the whole scheme of redemption, from its origin in God's eternal purpose, to its consummation in endless glory, is of grace; and that no part of it rests upon an uncertain ground, or is suspended upon any thing that may eventually fail, such as the contingent volitions of men; for all things are of God, who secures the faith and obedience of his elect, and works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. We shall now,

II. Mention some of the distinguishing properties of divine grace. And,

1. It is *sovereign* grace. That is, such grace or favour as flows purely from the will and good pleasure of God, as sovereign Lord and proprietor of all, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. and which cannot be seen in him when viewed only under the character of a Lawgiver and Judge. The sovereignty of God's grace is most clearly declared to Moses by himself, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" and the apostle's conclusion from this is, "so then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," Rom. ix. 15, 16. And this is that view of grace which he terms, "the good pleasure of his will—his good pleasure which he purposed in himself," Eph. i. 5, 9. It was the display

of the sovereignty of divine grace that made Jesus rejoice in spirit, and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matt. xi. 25, 26. Luke x. 21. While Christ was in this world he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we do not read of his rejoicing during his humbled state here but on this occasion, when contemplating the sovereignty of God in the dispensation of his grace, as acting in a way which became his own greatness and goodness, as Lord of heaven and earth, by conferring his special favours on whom he pleases; and often on such as appear to men the most unlikely and improper objects, that on them he might magnify the sovereignty of his grace, and that no flesh might glory in his presence. This view of divine grace filled the heart of the Saviour with joy, and drew forth his thankfulness and full acquiescence; "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Yet there are many of his professed followers who are so far from acquiescing in this view of divine grace, that they cannot endure it. That which filled the Saviour's heart with joy, and his tongue with thanksgiving, fills them with detestation and heart-risings, which often break out in the most shocking blasphemies against this view of the character of God. Surely such must be very differently minded from him whom they profess to own as their Lord.

2. It is *free* grace. This necessarily arises from its being sovereign grace; for whatever God bestows of his own mere good pleasure must be freely bestowed. The very term *grace* imports this; for it signifies free and undeserved favour, and is opposed to all works, or any degree of merit in its objects, as the procuring or moving

cause of it. The *character* and *condition* of those towards whom it is exercised clearly manifest its freeness. They were not only without merit, but guilty, and so children of wrath even as others, Eph. ii. 1—3. and are described as without strength, enemies and ungodly, Rom. v. 6, 10. so that nothing could suit or reach their case but sovereign free grace. In short, the gospel every where holds forth the freeness of divine grace in every part of the scheme of redemption. What was it that moved God to elect any of the race of Adam before they had a being, and in the foresight of their fall, when nothing good could be foreseen in them? It has been said that it was on account of their foreseen faith and holiness; but this is saying nothing to the purpose, unless it could be shewn that he foresaw that this faith and holiness were to originate from themselves; for if, in electing them, he purposed to bestow faith and holiness upon them, then these cannot be the *condition* of their election, but the *effects* of it, as the scriptures clearly show, Rom. ix. 23, 24. Eph. i. 3. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Tim. i. 9. 1 Pet. i. 2. What was it that moved God to send his Son to die for them, while they were yet sinners, enemies and ungodly? Is not this constantly and solely ascribed to his great love and free grace towards unworthy objects? John iii. 16. Rom. v. 8. 1 John iii. 16. chap. iv. 9, 10. Again, what condition does the unbelieving and impenitent perform, so as to engage God to give them faith and repentance, with the consequent blessings of redemption in their due time and order? It is certain they can perform none; and therefore the gift of faith and repentance can be ascribed to nothing but the absolute freeness of his grace.

3. It is *distinguishing* grace. That is, it is not extended to every individual of the human race univer-

sally and indiscriminately, but is limited to a certain number, who are particularly, personally, and unchangeably the objects of it, in distinction from others. This appears from what has already been said of their election, redemption, calling, perseverance, &c. In all which the scripture holds forth the speciality of divine grace, by which God makes a distinction among men, not according to any native worth or self-wrought goodness in them, or foreseen to be in them, more than in others ; but according to his own sovereign will, having mercy on whom he will have mercy. This view of divine grace is strongly opposed by many who profess the name of Christ. They seem anxious to free the Divine Being from injustice and partiality in his conduct towards his creatures, and they can find out no way of doing this, but by supposing that some must be better deserving of his grace than others. But this is to convert the sovereign free grace of God into distributive justice. Both indeed have their place, but not the same place. In proportion as any deserve the divine favour, in the same proportion does that favour cease to be free grace. God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works ; but if men's notions of his righteousness be such as to limit him entirely to the distribution of rewards and punishments in the whole compass of his purposes and conduct towards us ; if the sovereign Lord must shew only distributive justice, so that wherever that does not appear they may fix the charge of unrighteousness upon him : then they leave no place where the divine mercy can shew itself to any of us, and, according to this, it would be impossible for him to shew mercy and compassion to whom he will. But God himself expressly declares, “ I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion." Rom. ix. 15. This shews, that as none have a claim upon him on the score of justice, so he is at perfect liberty to have mercy on whom he will; which implies the same liberty, on the other hand, to reject whom he will, without doing injustice to any. And for this the apostle produces what the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth," ver. 17. And from both these passages he draws this conclusion, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth." ver. 18. Thus his sovereign grace is not universal, but distinguishing grace. It does not respect political nations as such, but those whom he calls out of all nations, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; and these are the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, ver. 23, 24.

4. It is *preventing* grace. By this I mean that it is not the *effect* but *cause* of all that is truly holy or good in its objects. None can be before-hand with the grace of God, so as to prepare, qualify, or make themselves more deserving of it. It waits not for the self-determination of the will of man, but brings every requisite along with itself. The preventing grace of God is not only displayed in election and redemption, in which men could not possibly be before-hand with God; but is also clear from the scripture account of our natural state in which we could do nothing to obtain the divine favour. It is also evident from all the passages of scripture which represent it as the cause of spiritual life, and of the first motion of the soul towards God, and which ascribe regeneration, faith, repentance, &c. to the influence of the Holy Spirit by the word upon the hearts of

men ; and it is exemplified in the scripture instances of conversion. The three thousand, who were converted on one day, were neither expecting nor seeking after any such thing ; nor were they more deserving of the divine favour than the rest of those who crucified Christ, but were fully convinced of the contrary, Acts ii. 23, 36, 37. The same thing may be observed of Paul, who found mercy while engaged in persecuting the saints, Acts ix. And the jailer at Philippi was just about to kill himself when divine grace took hold of him, and plucked him as a brand out of the burning. chap. xvi. It will, perhaps, be said, that these are extraordinary instances of preventing grace ; but that, in ordinary cases, men must first seek after the grace of God before they can obtain it. It is indeed a comfortable truth that God bestows grace on men in consequence of their seeking it, Matt. vii. 7, 8. James i. 5. 1 John v. 14, 15. “ He giveth grace unto the humble ;” *i. e.* he giveth *more* grace to them whom he hath first made humble by his grace, James iv. 6. So that preventing grace is necessary before they can seek aright, or in faith with a true heart ; for faith is the gift of God, and it is he that poureth out the Spirit of grace and supplication. It is God that *begins* the good work in them, Phil. i. 6. and who quickens the dead in sins, Col. ii. 13. The apostle, having described the guilty and miserable state which believers themselves had been in previous to their being called by preventing grace, as being dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature the children of wrath even as others, says, “ But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ ; by grace ye are saved.” And in the words of our text he says, “ For by grace are ye saved through

faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 4, 5, 8. When God visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name, they were not seeking after him, but worshipping dumb idols, till he sent the gospel unto them, accompanied with the power of his Spirit, and called them out of darkness into his marvellous light; and therefore he says, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Rom. x. 20. And this must always be the case in the conversion of sinners, otherwise none of them would ever truly seek after God.

5. Lastly, It is *effectual* grace. That is, it fully and completely obtains its end in the salvation of all its objects. This is denied by many, who hinge salvation entirely upon the self-moved will of man, and so render the issue not merely uncertain, but absolutely abortive. But the purpose of God according to election must stand immutably fixed, not of works, but of him that calleth. His power to accomplish all his pleasure is incontroulable. Christ's death is effectual to save all who were given him, and for whom he died, so that they shall never perish, nor shall any pluck them out of his hand. The Spirit of God accompanying the word is effectual to overcome the natural resistance of their hearts, and irresistibly, though freely to move their wills by suitable motives into compliance with his own will. By his providence he over-rules and disposes all events and second causes, and even the determinations of free agents, so as effectually and infallibly to subserve and accomplish his holy and gracious purposes, and thus makes all things work together for good to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28. So that as the whole plan of grace is of God's contrivance, and as the management of every

part of it is in his own hand, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, it cannot possibly miscarry, as it certainly would, if any part of it depended on the will of man.

I shall now, in the last place, point out some of the causes of men's opposition to the scripture doctrine of divine grace.

PART II.

It seems natural to the heart of man to reject this doctrine, and to dislike the view which it gives of the character of God. Not only philosophical Deists, but the carnal unthinking multitude, are to a man opposed to the true grace of God ; and those who have been converted from that state can testify how averse they were to admit the scripture doctrine on this head. But there are others who profess Christianity, many of whom are men of good parts and unimpeachable morals, who have the strongest prejudices against the sovereign, distinguishing, preventing, and efficacious grace of God, and muster up every objection and argument against it which they can think of. We shall, therefore, take notice of some of the avowed grounds of their opposition, from which we may easily trace it to its source.

1. They cannot see that it consists with the holiness and goodness of God that he should have decreed to permit the entrance of sin into the world. Some of them will admit that he barely foresaw it, but maintain that it came into being, and continues hitherto, contrary to his will or without his voluntary permission ; otherwise, they think, he must be the author of sin.

It is an undeniable fact that sin actually exists, and if it does so, as they affirm, contrary to the permissive will of God, this is plainly to deny his having power to prevent it ; for what can hinder any rational being to

prevent or remove what is contrary to its will but the want of power? That God not only foresaw, but determined to permit sin, can be denied by none who really believe his prescience and almighty power. As to his being the author of sin, if by this they mean that he is the sinner, agent, or acter of sin, to impute this to the infinitely holy God would be the most impious blasphemy: but if by his being the author of sin they only mean, his foreseeing and determining to permit it, and his so ordering things as that it should infallibly have a being for his own most holy and wise ends, this is no impeachment of the character of the Most High. As “God himself cannot be tempted with evil,” there being nothing in his own nature to incline him to any thing but what is perfectly good and just, nor any outward object that can have the least influence to bias him from the immutable rectitude of his nature; so “neither tempteth he any man,” to commit sin, by any direct, immediate, or positive influence from himself; “but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.” James i. 13, 14. Yet the scriptures clearly reveal, that God so orders and disposeth of the sinful designs and actions of men as to make them subservient to his own holy purposes, and conducive to the best of ends. This might be illustrated by a great number of instances, but I shall mention only two. It was the sin of Joseph’s brethren to sell him into Egypt; for they were influenced in this by their own envy and hatred of him; but he shows them afterwards the design of God in it; “Now, therefore, be not grieved or angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life; so that now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” Gen. xlv. 5, 8.—“As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God

meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive," chap. i. 20. The crucifixion of the Son of God was one of the greatest sins that could be committed, and was influenced by the most wicked dispositions and evil motives that could exist in the human heart! yet it was by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge* of God that he was delivered up to the will of his murderers, who by wicked hands crucified and slew him, Acts ii. 23. and in this they did nothing but what *God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done*, Acts iv. 28. But is there a Christian who does not blame those murderers of the Prince of Life for the part they acted in that matter, and who does not at the same time adore with gratitude and admiration the holy and glorious design of God in it? These instances demonstrate, that while men, in pursuance of their own wicked designs, are voluntarily transgressing the *revealed will* of God, which is the rule of their duty, they are notwithstanding unintentionally fulfilling his *secret will*, by which he orders and disposes all events to his own purpose in the most wise and holy manner.

Such are the extensive operations and consequences of sin in the affairs of mankind, that to deny that God permits and over-rules it to his own purposes, is in fact to deny that he has the government of the world. Sin is indeed infinitely hateful to a holy God, and repugnant to his nature, and therefore he cannot will sin as such, or for its own sake, *i. e.* considered simply as evil, and as his ultimate end; but he may will and so order things as that moral evil should exist in the world for the sake of the contrary good which he intends to educe from it, or rather, to which it gives occasion. The ultimate design of God in all his works and ways is the

manifestation of his own glory, which is the highest and best end; and therefore he so manages and disposeth of the sins of moral agents in his grand scheme, as to make them subservient to the display of all his moral perfections, like the shades in a picture which serve to make the features rise more conspicuously to view. It was sin that gave occasion for the striking display of his holiness in the revelation of his wrath from heaven against it, and of his inflexible justice in punishing it. It was the sin and consequent misery of men that opened the way for the exercise and glorious display of his sovereign grace, rich mercy, amazing love, and manifold wisdom; and, in a word, the whole plan of redemption supposes sin, and was formed with a view to manifest, in the highest degree, the glory of all the divine perfections, in delivering the elect from its guilt, power and consequences.

2. They spurn at the sovereignty of God in having determined, before the foundation of the world, to save a certain number of sinners of mankind, to the praise of his glorious grace, and to pass by and suffer others to go on and persist in their rebellion, for the display of his power and justice in the punishment of sin. This they cry out against as arbitrary, partial and unjust; and affirm, that God willeth the salvation of all mankind, and hath sent his Son to die for them all without exception.

But may not the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, who is indebted to none of his creatures, determine to extend his favour to, or withhold it from whom he pleases, and act accordingly? If the *whole* of fallen mankind deserved to be rejected and punished, they having all sinned and come short of his glory, Rom. iii. 23. where is the injustice in punishing a *part* of them?

Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? ver. 5. And if, to avoid partiality, God were bound in *justice* to save or punish all, how could he shew *mercy* to any? Justice is not mercy; for, according to distributive justice, none of the guilty race of Adam could be saved.

If God equally wills the salvation of all mankind, how does it happen that all of them are not saved? If the scripture is at all to be believed, it informs us, that **MANY** enter in at the wide gate and broad way that leadeth to destruction; and that they are comparatively but **FEW** who find the strait gate and narrow way which leadeth unto life, Matt. vii. 13, 14. How shall we account for this, if God equally wills the salvation of all? Is not the power of God equal to his will? If it is not, how shall he do all his pleasure, or work all things after the counsel of his own will? Isa. xlv. 10. Eph. i. 11. True, indeed, the rule of duty which God hath given to men is frequently called his *will*, and some term it his *revealed* or *preceptive will*; and in this view of his will it may be said, though improperly, that he wills the salvation of all to whom he sends his word, because he thereby commandeth all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel unto their salvation, and promises salvation to all who shall believe; but this does not intimate that he so wills as actually to determine or design the salvation even of all who hear the gospel, much less of all mankind: and to affirm that he thus wills to save all, but cannot accomplish his will, or do all his pleasure, is to deny his omnipotence, which verges on atheism.

Again, if God has sent his Son to die for every individual of mankind without exception, how is it that all are not saved? Did Christ die in vain for a great part of mankind? If Christ's death was really intended to be

a proper atonement for the sins of such as perish; if it has made full satisfaction, and God has accepted of it on their account, how comes it that they themselves must eternally suffer for those very sins for which Christ has already suffered as their substitute?

To get rid of this difficulty, it has been said, that Christ died only *conditionally* for all mankind, and that the benefit of his death is restricted to those who shall perform the condition. But this does not solve the difficulty, unless the foreknowledge of God be also denied; for if God foresaw that a great part of mankind would not perform the condition, how could he intend that the death of Christ should be of saving benefit to such? And to suppose that Christ died for those for whom no saving benefit was intended, is to contradict the whole revealed design of his death. The apostle considered the death of Christ as inseparably connected with the bestowal of all spiritual blessings on those for whom he died: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

But what is it they would fix upon as the *condition* of salvation? Is it *repentance*? It is God that grants unto men repentance unto life, Acts v. 3. chap. xi. 18. Is it *faith*? That is the gift of God, and is given in the behalf of Christ, Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29. Is it *love*? God promises to circumcise the heart to love him, and to write his law in the heart, Deut. xxx. 6. Jer. xxxi, 33. Is it *good works*? Believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. Is it *perseverance* unto the end? They are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5. These things are indeed matters of command, and enforced by the strongest motives; conse-

quently they are duties, and require the exercise of our own faculties; yet they are secured in the decree of election, procured by Christ, and in due time bestowed upon the elect, and so are matters of promise, and effects of supernatural divine influence. But the opposers of the doctrine of divine grace are aware, that were they to admit this, it would overthrow their whole system; and therefore,

3. If they admit any divine influence at all as necessary to the conversion of sinners, or to their believing in Christ and perseverance in faith and holiness, they strenuously deny that it is efficacious and infallible in producing the desired effect. They seem to be exceedingly jealous lest the supernatural influence of divine grace should interfere with the sovereign self-determination of the human will, and lay it under a moral necessity of complying with the will of God.

It is indeed essential to the will of man to be free and voluntary in its actings, and all compulsion, or co-action, is inconsistent with the liberty of the will. But surely God has not, out of respect to the will of man, deprived himself of the liberty of working all things, either in providence or grace, after the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11. As God is the supreme Governor of the moral world, so the free volitions and actions of intelligent agents must necessarily be under his determining providence, and ordered by him either in the way of positive efficiency or permission. The will of man cannot possibly have a higher degree of liberty than when it is determined or influenced by some prevailing motive or other; for then it acts freely from its own choice or inclination; and the stronger and more agreeable the motive appears, the greater freedom the will has in complying with it. This is the only liberty of will which a rational moral agent can possess.

But the freedom of will which they plead for is quite different. It is a freedom which is supposed to depend upon, and arise from a state of perfect indifference, in which the will has no inclination to one thing more than another, and so is at liberty to determine its own choice independently of any cause, motive or influence without itself, or without any reason or ground of its choice, but its own sovereign self-determination. Such a freedom of will as this involves in it the grossest absurdities, and never yet existed in a rational creature. It supposes a man to be for a time deprived of all discernment of the different qualities of things, consequently, of all preference of one thing to another, so that their being good or bad, lovely or hateful, beneficial or hurtful, &c. must be all alike to him. This, indeed, would free him from the influence of motives; but was there ever a rational creature in such a state of indifference? Further, if the will determines its own choice, without being influenced by any motive, then it can have no reason or ground of that choice. It is a choice without judgment, reason, inducement or end, and so altogether unaccountable. Such a liberty of will would render all inducements or persuasives perfectly useless; no counsels, exhortations, warnings, commands, promises, threatenings, &c. could be of any use in moving the will, if it determined itself without them.

But they imagine, that if the will is under any kind of necessity whatever in its determination or choice, it is deprived of that liberty which is essential to moral agency, virtue or vice, praise or blame. Yet it appears from what has already been noticed, that the very reverse is the truth; for though it is essential to an action's being morally good or evil, that it proceed from the will or choice of the agent; yet there is no choice, however

voluntary in itself, free from every kind of necessity ; and necessity securing the choice, does not hinder any voluntary action from being morally good or evil, praiseworthy or blameable. Thus with regard to *holiness* or *virtue*, God himself is *necessarily* holy, just, and good, and cannot do evil ; but this necessity does not derogate from his moral character, nor render him less worthy of praise, but the contrary. Jesus Christ in his human nature was, throughout his whole life in this world, perfectly holy, and without the least stain of sin or moral evil ; and he was *necessarily* so, it being as impossible that he should be otherwise, as it was that the purpose of God and the whole plan of redemption should fail ; but this necessity was perfectly consistent with the perfection of his merits and moral worth. The saints in heaven are secured from sinning any more ; are they therefore no longer moral agents, or capable of the exercise of virtue or holiness ? Again, with respect to the necessity of *sin*, Christ was foreordained to save his people from their sins ; yet this supposes the *necessity* of the entrance of sin from which they were to be saved ; but this necessity does not alter the nature of sin, nor excuse the sinner. God foreknew this event with absolute certainty, and though his foreknowing it was not the cause of it, yet it proves that the future existence of the event was necessary or infallible, and could not possibly fail. The death of Christ was *necessary*, as being fixed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that the scriptures might be fulfilled ; yet his murderers, who acted voluntarily in putting him to death, were not the less guilty or worthy of blame. Those who are judicially hardened, and given up of God to their own lusts and errors, *necessarily* do evil, *i. e.* they are under a moral necessity, from the energy of error and their own

vicious inclinations to do so; but they are not therefore without fault or blame in so doing. Surely Pharaoh, the blinded Jews, and the votaries of the man of sin, were all guilty and justly punishable. From the whole it is evident, that though the will is necessarily determined by the prevailing motive, or that which, on the whole, appears most eligible or agreeable, and cannot incline otherwise; yet this is perfectly consistent with moral agency, and with the nature of virtue or vice, consequently, with praise or blame.

Now, with respect to the influence of divine grace in the conversion of a sinner, if, as they affirm, that only produces some good motions and impressions tending that way, but still leaves the will at full liberty either to comply or resist according to its own self-determination, then it is plain that no real conversion is effected by divine grace; so that if ever any should happen to be converted, it must be of him that willeth and runneth, and not of God that sheweth mercy. But those who hold this sentiment must have a very defective and superficial view both of human depravity and of the nature of conversion, as well as of the greatness of that power that is necessary to effect it; otherwise they could never imagine that any of the fallen race of Adam, if left to the determination of their own will, would ever turn to God. Our Lord says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him," John vi. 44. Conversion is represented as a new creation, 2 Cor. v. 17. and to be the effect of that divine power that raised Christ from the dead, Eph. i. 19, 20. Col. ii. 12, 13. And this divine power is represented as exerted not only in illuminating the understanding, but also in determining the will. God's people are made willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx. 3. for it is God

that worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13. and it is his repeated promise, “A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh,” Ezek. xxxvi. 26. ch. xi. 19. Jer. xxxi. 33. ch. xxxii. 39. These passages clearly shew, that God removes the natural aversion of the will, and gives it a prevailing inclination to comply with what he requires; and to suppose that, after all, it remains in a state of indifference, and at full liberty to resist, is a perfect contradiction. All the promises respecting the efficacious grace of God in the conversion of sinners are nothing but the revelation of his eternal purpose, which cannot be frustrated. Accordingly Christ says, “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me,” *i. e.* shall certainly come; but then he shews, that they do not thus come of themselves, but by being drawn of the Father; “No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him:” and he further shews, that this drawing (which he explains of divine teaching) is effectual: “Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,” John vi. 37, 44, 45.

4. Those who oppose this doctrine endeavour to throw the whole scheme of salvation loose, and to hinge it upon the contingent self-determination of the human will. They deny that there is any inseparable connection between the successive steps of divine grace, which are enumerated by the apostle in Rom. viii. 28—30. or that they all relate to the same individual objects. They suppose, that God may have foreknown and predestinated some whom he does not call, and may call many whom he does not justify, and justify others whom he does not glorify; and they also affirm, that Christ died with an

intention to save many, who shall notwithstanding perish for ever. But that is flatly to contradict the most determinate language of scripture, which expressly declares, that "WHOM he did foreknow, he ALSO did predestinate; and WHOM he did predestinate, THEM he also called; and WHOM he called, THEM he also justified; and WHOM he justified, THEM he also glorified." No words can be devised to express more pointedly the inseparable connection between every part of this series, and that the same individual persons are intended throughout the whole. And these are the sheep who were given to Christ, for whom he laid down his life, and concerning whom he says, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 15, 28, 29. The whole plan of salvation is firmly fixed in the immutable purpose of God, and the execution of all its parts is ascribed to him; and though his *calling* those whom he hath predestinated be one link of the chain, yet as in that calling he effectually draws them to Christ, it must be as infallible as any of the rest.

5. Their notions of divine grace seem to be very different from the view which the gospel gives of it. The grace of God is his free and unmerited favour or love towards miserable and unworthy objects, and which has no cause without himself to excite or draw it forth, but arises merely from his own sovereign will and good pleasure. This grace is not only the first spring and source of the plan and work of redemption, in which mankind could not possibly have any hand; but the success of all the means, and the effectual application and bestowal of all the special benefits of salvation, are also constantly ascribed to the same free grace, as opposed to any works, worth, or native ability in the creature.

It is not meant to deny that there are such promises as men term *conditional*; but this only shews the *order* in which God freely bestows the blessings of his grace; for these things which are looked upon as conditions, are as much the effects of divine grace as the consequent blessings are, as has already been shewn.

But those of whom we are now speaking view the whole steps of the sovereign grace of God in a conditional light. If they admit that God has chosen or predestinated any to salvation before the foundation of the world, they affirm that it was because he foreknew that they would perform the condition of faith and obedience, and so make themselves fit objects of his grace. As the greater part of their reasoning turns upon this principle, I would observe upon it, (1.) That this conditional grace does not reach the case of fallen sinners, who are utterly unworthy, without strength, and dead in trespasses and sins, but extends only to such as are supposed to qualify themselves for it by performing the condition; and so is not that grace which the apostle constantly opposes to our works, and which excludes boasting, Rom. xi. 5, 6. Eph. ii. 4—11. 2 Tim. i. 9. (2.) To represent God as having elected or predestinated men on account of their foreseen faith and holiness, is to reverse the order in which the scripture states these things. The apostle says, “ he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,” not *because* he foresaw we would be holy, but “ that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love,” Eph. i. 4. *i. e.* they were chosen to be holy; and so it is said they were “ predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Rom. viii. 29. and that not on account of any foreseen goodness in them more than in others, but “ according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory

of his grace, wherein he hath made them accepted in the beloved," Eph. i. 5, 6. So that their faith and holiness are the *effects*, not the *cause* or *condition* of their election and predestination. (3.) Their scheme makes the will of man to be the first moving cause or spring of his salvation; for they ascribe to it a sovereign self-determining power, independent of the efficacious grace of God; and so they make the will or purpose of God (if they allow him any in that matter) to be dependent on, and subject to the determination of the human will. It is their avowed sentiment, that God could not possibly create rational creatures, without divesting himself of all government of their volitions, and giving them a power to counteract his own gracious designs: and as to the grace of God towards lost sinners, they make that to consist in his affording them the outward means, joined with an earnest, though unavailing, wish that these may prove effectual for the salvation of all mankind, concerning which he determines nothing, but leaves it to almighty man to decree his own eternal fate*. Thus they divest God of the government of human volitions and actions, either by his providence or grace. But the

* The following lines may show how extravagantly some express themselves on this subject:

Man shall be blest, as far as man *permits*.
 Not man alone, all *rational*s, heav'n arms
 With an illustrious, but tremendous pow'r
 To counteract its own most gracious ends;
 And this, of strict *necessity*, not *choice*.——
 A nature *rational* implies the power
 Of being blest, or wretched, as we please;—
 Heav'n *wills* our happiness, *allows* our doom;
Invites us ardently, but not *compels*;
 Heav'n but *persuades*, almighty man *decrees*;
 Man is the maker of immortal fates.

NIGHT THOUGHTS, Night 7.

word of God declares that “his (providential) kingdom ruleth over all,” Psal. ciii. 19. and that “he doth ACCORDING TO HIS WILL in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” Dan. iv. 35. The determinations of rulers have the greatest visible influence over human affairs; yet “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will,” Prov. xxi. 1. He not only manifests his *foreknowledge* of all future events, by “declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done;” but he also declares his *immutable purpose* to accomplish them, “saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,” Isa. xlvi. 10. See also Psal. xxxiii. 11. Prov. xix. 25. Again, with regard to the dispensation of his grace, nothing is suspended upon uncertain conditions, or on the self-determination of the human will: for “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,” and so maketh willing, Rom. ix. 16. Psal. cx. 3. He hath predestinated his people, not according to their will, but “according to the good pleasure of his own will—according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself,” Eph. i. 5, 9. And so he saves and calls them with an holy calling, “not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the times of ages,” 1 Tim. i. 9. Thus “he worketh all things,” not as the human will may please to permit him, but “after the counsel of his own will;” nor to the praise of any self-wrought goodness in the creature, but “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved,” Eph. i. 6, 11.

From the reasonings of men against the scripture doctrine of divine grace, and the contempt with which many treat it, we may form some opinion of the cause of their opposition. It does not appear to be the effect of education, of an attentive study of the scriptures, or of an eminent degree of piety; for the most ignorant, uncultivated, and irreligious are opposed to it, and with respect to the ingenious arguments of the learned, they are evidently dictated by the same prejudices which are common to them and the most illiterate. It appears, therefore, that this opposition arises from some principle which is deeply rooted in the human heart; and this radical principle of opposition I take to be **PRIDE**, or **SELF-DEPENDENCE**, for the whole of their objections and arguments against the doctrine of divine grace amounts just to this, that it ascribes too much to God, and too little to the creature, in the matter of salvation. And indeed none will submit to, or relish the sovereign supernatural grace of God revealed in the gospel, but such as have a deep and humbling sense of their need of it, and are fully convinced that nothing else will suit their case. Such will heartily admit "that all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v. 18. and that "of him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory only in the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

I should now conclude with showing what practical improvement we ought to make of the doctrine of divine grace. But this is a large field; for the most of the exhortations in the New Testament, which relate either to Christian tempers or practice, are just so many practical improvements of this doctrine, and are enforced by

motives drawn from it. I shall therefore only mention a few things.

1. As the revealed plan of divine grace, and the execution of it in the work of redemption, give the clearest and fullest display of the glorious perfections of God, we ought to form our conceptions of his character chiefly by that display. His works of creation and providence demonstrate his wisdom, power, and goodness, and it is our duty to contemplate his glory in these his visible works; but the effects of divine goodness which nature exhibits are only temporal favours which are mixed with many natural evils, and at last terminate in death: so that those who reject any other knowledge of God than as the Author of nature, must be at an awful uncertainty as to their situation with respect to their Maker, while conscious guilt, notwithstanding all their speculations respecting the benevolence of the Deity, must, occasionally at least, awaken in them very unpleasant apprehensions of his displeasure. God has also manifested himself in his revealed law, which discovers his holiness, justice and goodness, as supreme moral Governor and Judge; but while this law points out our duty, and promises life to the perfectly obedient, it at the same time discovers our guilt, and the curse due to us on that account; and as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, it is plain that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, *Rom. iii. 20, 23*. When sinners, therefore, entertain the least hope of acceptance with God through their own righteousness or obedience to the law, it discovers the grossest ignorance of the character of God, and of their situation in his sight; for it supposes that he may dispense with the perfection and sanction of his law in their favour, and so with his own holiness, truth and justice, as Law-

giver and Judge. Whatever presumptions self-love or self-righteousness may suggest, no sinner is warranted to entertain hopes of divine mercy, but so far as he perceives that God can be just in justifying the ungodly; and this is no where to be seen but in the plan of redemption. There sovereign supernatural grace reigns; but it reigns through righteousness: it reigns in a most holy and righteous manner, through the obedience unto death of the Son of God as the substitute of the guilty, by which he hath satisfied all the demands of law and justice on their account, and obtained eternal redemption for them. It is here that all the perfections of God unite harmoniously in their fullest exercise, and shine forth with a more glorious lustre than in all his other works and ways. The knowledge of the divine character, as thus manifested, is that which is promised, to all the subjects of the new covenant, from the least unto the greatest of them, Jer. xxxi. 34. and is the effect of that divine teaching by which they are drawn to the Saviour, John vi. 44, 45, for it is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 6. This is the only knowledge of God that can give solid hope to guilty sinners, which can reconcile their hearts, and draw forth their supreme esteem of him, and influence them to perfect holiness in his fear.

2. The doctrine of sovereign free grace is a most humbling doctrine, which none will submit to while they imagine that they have any the least claim upon God in preference to the very chief of sinners, or that there is any cause whatever in themselves why God should regard them more than those who perish, or while they are engaged in establishing their own righteousness as a foundation for such preferable claim, and that they may stand upon more honourable terms with their Maker than the self-condemned publican. Indeed, none can relish

this doctrine till they are convinced that it is just with God to punish them with everlasting destruction, and that they can do nothing for their own relief; and, in short, till they find every false ground of hope, which is natural to the human heart, fail them, and they are reduced to lie at mere sovereign mercy through the atonement as their alone plea.

3. The doctrine of God's sovereignty in having mercy on whom he will, wears a most amiable and encouraging aspect to the self-condemned sinner, and removes from him every cause of despair. For how can his guilt and unworthiness lead him to despair, if he knows that none but the utterly unworthy are chosen of God to salvation? None but the guilty can be objects of sovereign mercy, and it is only for such that Christ died. There was no occasion for such sovereignty to appear, but that mercy might be shown to the worthless; and, but for sovereign grace, all mankind without distinction had perished, according to every rule of equity.

4. This doctrine lays us under the highest obligations, and presents us with the strongest motives and encouragements to holiness of heart and life. While it supposes and confirms all our natural obligations to obey the holy law of our Creator, which is summed up in love to him and our neighbour, it superadds the obligations arising from redemption: so that all who know the grace of God in truth, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious, must feel themselves under the strongest ties, not only of interest, but of duty and gratitude, to glorify God in their bodies and spirits, and to perfect holiness in his fear. God hath chosen his people that they should be holy, and without blame, before him in love, Eph. i. 4. Christ hath given himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity,

and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14. Holiness therefore is one great end of redemption; for without this no man shall see the Lord, or be capable of enjoying him. The doctrine of divine grace furnishes us with the most powerful motives and inducements to holiness, such as dispose the mind for, and form the heart to it; and so the faith of it is represented as purifying the heart, working by love, and overcoming the world. These motives are so wisely adapted to our present state of imperfection as to operate both upon our hopes and fears. On our hopes, to animate and encourage us in the way of holiness; and on our fears, to check self-confidence, presumptuous hopes, and carnal security in the way of sin and slothfulness.

Those who oppose the doctrine of divine grace maintain, that it makes void the law, looses the obligations to holiness, and encourages licentiousness. This is the old objection to the doctrine of grace as taught by the apostle Paul himself. Some slanderously reported that he taught, in effect, that men should do evil that good may come, or that the more evil they committed, the greater glory would redound to the grace and faithfulness of God in their salvation: but the apostle, instead of a direct reply, cuts the objectors short, declaring that their damnation is just, Rom. iii. 7, 8. He denies that the law was made void through the faith, but, on the contrary, was established, ver. 31. And, having stated that sin and death entered into the world by Adam, and that the law of Moses afterwards entered that the offence might abound; but “that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound—and reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord,”

Rom. v. 12. 20, 21. Yet while he maintains the doctrine of divine grace in its utmost extent and freedom, he, throughout the whole of chap. vi., cuts off every handle, either from its avowed opposers on the one hand, or its licentious abusers on the other. "What shall we say then?" What is the consequence of this doctrine of the abounding of grace, or the practical use we are to make of it? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" This consequence he rejects with the utmost abhorrence; "God forbid: How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" He shows that believers, as was signified to them in their baptism, are by virtue of union with Christ in his death, freed both from the guilt and dominion of sin; that their old man is crucified together with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin: And that as Christ was raised from the dead, and dieth no more, but liveth unto God; so they also are quickened and raised together with him to walk in newness of life. And thus being made free from sin, and become servants to God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. But with regard to those who presume upon the grace of God as an encouragement to continue in sin, the apostle declares, that as they are the servants of sin and do its work, they shall receive the just and proper wages of such a service, which is death and endless misery: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON IV.

ON THE ECONOMY OF REDEMPTION.



EPH. i. 3, 4.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love.

THE revelation which God hath made of himself in the scriptures, proceeds upon the supposition that mankind universally are the subjects of sin, and so liable to misery as the effects of his just displeasure. This makes the scripture doctrine of redemption appear to be worthy of all acceptation, illustrates its meaning, and demonstrates its importance: for it is a redemption from the guilt, power and dominion of sin here, and from the awful consequences which await it hereafter.

The apostle, contemplating this subject, with the most lively gratitude blesses "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us" (believing Jews and Gentiles) "with all spiritual blessings in

heavenly places (or things) in Christ," *i. e.* with blessings which are spiritual in their nature, and heavenly in their original and tendency, and which shall be completed in the heavenly state; and so are very different from the outward privileges of the Jews, and the earthly blessings which they expected from the Messiah. These spiritual blessings the Father hath bestowed upon us in Christ, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world;" and this choice was influenced not by any foreseen holiness in us, but "that we might be holy and without blame before him in love; for he "hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2. and "hath saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works; but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Taking a view of our text as it stands in close connection with the rest of the chapter, we may notice the following particulars:

I. A manifestation of the Divine Three in the economy of redemption.

II. The blessings of which this redemption consists.

III. The original plan according to which it is executed. And,

IV. The ultimate end and design of the whole.

I. In the economy of redemption there is a distinction in the one Godhead plainly held forth by three personal names and relative characters, and indeed by every mode of speech whereby we distinguish persons among men. Here we have, the *God and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 3, 17. Our *Lord Jesus Christ*, the

Beloved, ver. 3, 6. The *Holy Spirit* of promise, by which believers are sealed, and which is the earnest of their inheritance, v. 13, 14. These are the *three* Divine Witnesses that bear record in heaven, and who are declared to be *one*, 1 John v. 7. the Three into whose name believers are baptized, Matt. xxviii. 19. Here then is a plain distinction of what we call *persons*, which the weakest and most simple Christian may understand ; though as to the *manner* of their subsistence, or what it is that constitutes their distinct personality, the most intelligent Christian knows nothing. They are not distinguished to us by any essential property of the divine nature, for that they possess in common ; but by relative names and characters, and by a certain order of working peculiar to each, both in creation and redemption.

1. In creation the Father is represented as first in order of operation. The prepositions which mark the agency of the Father and Son are different when both of them are mentioned together. All things are said to be (ἐξ) *of* or *from* God the Father, as the first mover, or original source ; and they are said to be (διὰ) *by* or *through* Jesus Christ, as the immediate agent bringing the Father's designs into actual effect, 1 Cor. viii. 6. And so God is said to have " created all things *BY* Jesus Christ," Eph. iii. 9. to have made the worlds *BY* his Son, Heb. i. 2. " For *BY* him (the Son) were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible," &c, Col. i. 16. See also, John i. 3. But notwithstanding this order of operation, as creation is a work peculiar to God, so it must demonstrate the eternal power and Godhead of the Son as well as of the Father.

2. The same mode of speech is used to express their

order of acting in the work of redemption: "All things are ($\epsilon\kappa$) OF God," (*viz.* the Father,) "who hath reconciled us to himself ($\delta\iota\alpha$) BY Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v. 18. "God was ($\epsilon\upsilon$) IN, or BY, Christ reconciling the world to himself," ver. 19. In the economy of redemption, the person of the Father sustains the Majesty of the Godhead, and acts his part in the character of the Great Supreme; and that not only in relation to his creatures, but also in relation to his Son; and so he is termed *the God and Father*, not only of angels and men, but of *our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 3, 17. See also John xx. 17. 2 Cor. i. 3. chap. xi. 31. Heb. i. 9. 1 Pet. i. 3. Though the Son is possessed of the same divine nature with the Father, yet as a Son, partaking of human nature, and vested with the office of mediator between God and man, he sustains and acts in a subordinate character to that of the Father. The Father is represented as the original source of all that authority, dominion, and fulness which the Son possesses as Mediator. It was the Father who *sent* his Son to be the Saviour of the world, 1 John iv. 14. The Spirit which dwelt in him without measure was given him by the Father, John iii. 34. He neither did nor spake any thing of himself, but as commissioned and instructed of his Father, John v. 19. chap. viii. 28. He sought not his own glory, nor did his own will, but his Father's, John viii. 50. chap. vi. 38. It was the Father that gave him power to lay down his life for the sheep, and to take it again, John x. 17, 18. that raised him from the dead, Rom. iv. 24. chap. x. 9. that exalted him to the highest glory and dominion at his own right hand, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 19, 23.—who gave him to have life in himself to quicken whom he will,

John v. 21, 26. and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man, ver. 27. And as he holds the mediatorial kingdom of the Father till all the ends of it are answered, so when the end cometh, he shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, and also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. When therefore we believe in Christ, we “by (or through) him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.” 1 Pet. i. 21. And as “the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father who hath sent him,” John v. 22, 23. so when we worship the Lamb that was slain, and bow the knee to the exalted Redeemer, confessing that he is Lord over all, we do it to the glory of God the Father, who hath exalted him, put all things under him, and commanded all the angels of God to worship him, Philip. ii. 9—12. Heb. i. 6.

3. The Father being termed “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” implies that he stands in a *covenant relation* to Christ, and in him to all those whom he represents; consequently, that he is *the source of all blessings* to him and them. God formerly made himself known as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” Exod. iii. 6. This recalled to the minds of his ancient people how he loved their fathers, and covenanted to be a God to them, and to their seed after them, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. Deut. iv. 37, 38. and so tended to assure them of all the blessings he had stipulated to them in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their venerable patriarchs, which, as they respected the old covenant and fleshly seed, were only typical and earthly bless-

ings. But now, under the new and better covenant, he is styled *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who is that notable *seed* promised to Abraham, Gal. iii. 16. *in whom*, and not in Abraham personally, *all nations of the earth*, and not the Jews only, *shall be blessed*; and that not with temporal blessings in earthly things, *but with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ*. He hath procured these blessings by his obedience unto death, and so all the promises of God are made in the first place to him, Gal. iii. 16. who is the prime heir, and first-born of all the family of God. To him they are accomplished, and all his many brethren inherit them in his right, and as connected with him. His God and Father in blessing him, hath blessed us *in him* as our covenant head, and the great repository of all blessings; “for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,” Col. ii. 9. and “we are complete in him,” ver. 10. He is the great medium through whom all spiritual blessings are communicated to his people; and it is out of his fulness that they all have received, and grace for grace, John i. 16. Thus we may see how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in him; and as Christ dispenseth these blessings to us out of his mediatorial fulness, so they are said to be not only from God the Father, but also from the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. i. 3.

4. The Holy Spirit is another divine person who acts his part in the economy of redemption. He is called the Spirit of God; the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Rom. viii. 9, 11.—the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, John xv. 26. He is also called the Spirit of Christ, Rom. viii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 11.—the Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13. as

being the promise of the Father, and promised by Christ to his disciples. Christ received him from the Father to dwell in himself in all his fulness, John iii. 34. to qualify him for his work, Luke iv. 18. and to communicate to his church, Acts ii. 33. His work is not to speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, John xvi. 13. to testify of Christ, chap. xv. 26.—to glorify Christ—to take of the things that are Christ's and shew them to his people, chap. xvi. 14, 15. So that he acts as the enlightener, comforter, sanctifier, and source of all gifts which are necessary to the edifying of the body of Christ. In all which he acts as commissioned by, and in subordination to the Father and Son ; even as the Son was sent by the Father to do his will, and acts in subordination to him.

Thus we see that in the economy of redemption there is an *order of acting* among the Divine Three which is never reversed ; and there are also *actions peculiar to each* : but whether these things have any foundation in the *nature* of the Deity, or depend entirely upon his *will*, is a question too deep for me to answer, and, I think, too daring to attempt. As we know nothing of this great mystery but by revelation, it becomes us with humility and reverence to regulate and bound our conceptions by that revelation, without seeking to be wise above that which is written, or intruding into those things which are so high above our reach. We shall now proceed to consider,

II. The blessings of which this redemption consists.

The apostle having said that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and that this was according to his eternal purpose, whereby he had chosen his people in

Christ before the foundation of the world, he proceeds in this and the following chapter to enumerate some of the principal blessings with which he hath blessed us in him. It has been already noticed, that the Father, in conferring all blessings on Christ, in whom it hath pleased him that all fulness should dwell, hath *blessed us in him* as our covenant head or public representative. As in his obedience unto death for us, we are said to be dead and buried with him, 2 Cor. v. 14. so in his resurrection and exaltation, we are said, even when we were dead in sins, to have been quickened together with Christ, to have been raised up together with him, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 5, 6. Christ, “in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God;” and upon this ground we are exhorted to “reckon ourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God (*ev*) in Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. vi. 10, 11. *i. e.* in him who died and rose again as our representative and head. But though the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ our representative, yet the *actual conveyance* and *application* of these blessings to us, by which we are brought to the *personal enjoyment* of them, is the work of the Holy Spirit, by means of the word of the truth of the gospel, making us to perceive and believe the truth concerning Christ, and to know and enjoy the things freely given to us of God. This is to be born again of the Spirit, (*δια*) through the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, John iii. 5, 6. 1 Pet. i. 23. From this it appears,

1. That as it is by faith that we are actually united to Christ, and receive the spiritual blessings which he hath procured for us; so, next to the outward means, faith

itself must be the first of all the blessings bestowed on us in our own persons: for till we believe in Christ we are in a state of condemnation, John iii. 36. It is in believing we pass from death unto life, chap. v. 24. This faith is also the beginning of the spiritual life as it exists in us, and the principle of every holy disposition of heart. But it must be observed, that though faith in Christ be a commanded duty, and the belief of our own heart; yet it is not the product of any natural principle in ourselves, nor is it sustained in place of the works of the law as the ground of our acceptance with God; for the apostle states the matter thus, "By GRACE are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the GIFT OF GOD," Eph. ii. 8. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ—to believe in him." Phil. i. 29.

2. The next blessing is *the forgiveness of sins*. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7. This is the same with justification, as David describeth it, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Rom. iv. 7, 8. This blessing is bestowed *according to the riches of his grace*; for we are justified freely by his grace, and that as opposed to all works of ours, Rom. iii. 24, 28. chap. 4, 5.—It is *through Christ's blood*, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24. whose blood was shed for the remission of sins, and is the meritorious cause of justification.—It is *through faith in his blood*, Rom. iii. 25. for "by him all that believe are justified from all things. Acts xiii. 39.

3. Another spiritual blessing is *the adoption of sons*.

“ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” Eph. i. 5. In that same eternal decree whereby God chose or singled them out from others of the fallen race, he also, of his own sovereign good pleasure, and not on account of any foreseen goodness in them, fore-ordained them to the dignity of adoption into his family, that they might be brought into the relation of sons to himself. In pursuance of this design, he, “ when the fulness of the time was come, sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. iv. 4, 5. And this adoption we actually receive when we believe in Christ; for “ as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” John i. 13. “ For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” Gal. iii. 26. “ and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Rom. viii. 17. Gal. iv. 7. That those who were by nature the children of wrath even as others, should be made the children of God, and enjoy all the privileges and blessings which belong to such a relation, is indeed a most wonderful display of free and transcendent love; and so the apostle John breaks out in admiration of it: “ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” 1 John iii. 1, 2.

4. *Sanctification*, or holiness of heart and life, is another blessing conferred through Christ, and derived from him, and that according to God’s purpose of elec-

tion. "He hath chosen us in him—that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love," Eph. i. 4. To be *sanctified* frequently signifies to be separated, set apart or consecrated to God, as his special property and for his service; and, in this sense, things as well as persons are said to be sanctified. Christ, who had no moral defilement, says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself," *i. e.* devote myself as a sacrifice to God for them, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth," *i. e.* that they may be cleansed from the guilt of sin, John xvii. 19. and it was that he might thus sanctify the people with his own blood, that he suffered without the gate, Heb. xiii. 12. and this is the same with their being justified. But to be sanctified, also signifies to be made holy by a renovation of the spirit of the mind, being created after the moral image of God in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. iv. 23, 24. This sanctification is produced by the Holy Spirit, and so is termed "the sanctification of the Spirit," 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2. but it is by means of the truth; and so Christ prays, "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. It is through the knowledge and belief of that truth which testifies of redemption from the curse of the law by the blood of Christ, that men are not only justified, but inwardly sanctified, become dead unto sin, and alive unto God, Rom. vi. 6, 7, 22. chap. vii. 4—7. Col. ii. 11—15. and from this inward sanctification of the heart proceeds holiness of life and conversation, in denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Titus ii. 11—15. This holiness is in the very nature of the thing essential to our happiness in the enjoyment of a holy God, and without it no man shall see the Lord, Heb.

xii. 14. But it admits of degrees, and is not perfect in this life while the flesh lusteth against the spirit.

5. There is *the sealing of the Spirit*: “In whom also (πιστευσαντες) having believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise; which is the earnest of our inheritance,” Eph. i. 13, 14. This sealing of the Spirit includes his sanctifying influence upon the heart by means of the truth, whereby he imprints, as it were, the moral image of God upon the soul, like as a seal impresses its likeness upon the wax; and in this sense it is essential to every believer to have this seal in some measure, from the consciousness of which he may rationally conclude that he is a child of God. But I apprehend that it also imports a further influence of the Spirit as the Comforter, by which he more abundantly sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of believers, Rom. v. 5. witnessing with their spirit that they are the children of God, chap. viii. 16. and giving them the lively hope and a kind of foretaste of the heavenly happiness; see 2 Cor. v. 5, 6. This is the earnest or pledge of the inheritance, by which they know their title to it, as joint-heirs with Christ; and this earnest they have in the meantime, *until*

6. *The redemption of the purchased possession*, ver. 14. God’s church or people are his *possession*, and they are termed (λαος εις περιποιησιν) a peculiar, or *purchased* people, 1 Pet. ii. 9. because he (περιποιησατο) hath purchased them with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. The *redemption* of the purchased possession is the resurrection from the dead. They who have the first-fruits of the Spirit are still groaning within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body, Rom. viii. 23. This is that redemption of which the

Spirit which now dwells in them is the earnest, Rom. viii. 11. and the day of redemption unto which they are sealed, Eph. iv. 30. The apostle speaks of this blessing at large in 1 Cor. xv. and states Christ's resurrection as the proof, pattern, and pledge of it.

7. Lastly, There is *the everlasting enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance*. "In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. There is an allusion here to the earthly inheritance which was divided among the tribes of Israel in portions and by lot: but the heavenly inheritance is distinguished from that typical one, as being incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and reserved in heaven for the elect, 1 Pet. i. 4. As they were predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, so were they predestinated to obtain the inheritance of children; and when they obtain the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body from the grave, and become the children of God as children of the resurrection, Luke xx. 36. then they shall actually be put in possession of the heavenly inheritance, when Christ shall address them thus, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, (*κληρονομησατε*) *inherit* the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34. Then they go into life eternal, ver. 46. and so shall ever be with the Lord, 1 Thess. iv. 17.

These are some of the principal blessings with which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed his people in him. All which are declared to be of his rich sovereign free grace, and according to his eternal purpose and choice of them before the foundation of the world. We proceed now to consider,

III. The original plan according to which the work of redemption was executed and its blessings conferred.

Many affirm that a formal covenant transaction was entered into between the Father and Son in eternity, respecting the work of redemption, wherein they mutually swore to each other to perform their respective parts. But the scriptures say nothing of such a formal transaction in eternity, and the texts they adduce to prove it have evidently another meaning, and refer either to the covenant made with Abraham, or the two covenants included therein by way of promise; *viz.* the old covenant made with Israel, and the new covenant ratified in Christ's blood; which last was also included in the covenant of royalty made with David. For instance; the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, was the promise which God made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law, Gal. iii. 17. The covenant which God made with his chosen, and swore unto David his servant, Psal. lxxxix. 3. was made with David the Son of Jesse, chiefly respecting God's raising up the Messiah of his seed to sit on his throne, ver. 4. 35, 36. with Luke i. 32, 33. Acts ii. 30. It is said, "the covenant of peace shall be between them both," Zech. vi. 13. but this is a promise of something future, and does not refer to a covenant before the world. The new covenant is said to be *everlasting*, Heb. xiii. 20. not because it was made in eternity, but because it shall never wax old or vanish away as the old covenant did. Thus I might go over all the passages brought in support of a covenant made before the world began.

But though we do not read of any formal covenant between the Father and Son before the world, yet the

whole work of redemption in all its circumstances, means, and effects, was not only foreknown by him, but unalterably fixed in his eternal purpose and determinate counsel from everlasting; and so he must have had the form or model of the whole, and of all its parts in his own eternal mind, previous to the exertion of his power in accomplishing it. This is what we call the *plan* of redemption; and unless such a previous plan or scheme had existed in the divine mind, its execution could not be the effect of eternal wisdom, counsel, and design, as it clearly evinces itself to be.

The word of God clearly reveals, that the whole work of redemption by Christ, as well as the particular objects of that redemption, were unalterably determined on in the counsel or purpose of God before the world, or from everlasting. With respect to Christ himself, it is said, "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. i. 20. *i. e.* fore-ordained before the world to be a Saviour in time. He was God's chief elect, chosen as the head of all the rest, Isa. xlii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 6. His people are said to be "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," and all the spiritual blessings conferred upon them in time are said to be *according* to that choice, Eph. i. 3, 4. They obtain the adoption of children in consequence of having been *predestinated* unto it, ver. 5. They are saved and called in due time, "according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. They obtain the heavenly inheritance in consequence of having been *predestinated* unto it, "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. for it is a "kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34. and their names are written

from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb, Rev. xiii. 8. Further, as they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, so they are represented as being *given* to him to redeem, keep, and bring unto glory, Heb. ii. 10, 13. They were given unto him before he came into the world; for he came into the world to take part of the same flesh and blood with the children which God had given him, ver. 14. and to lay down his life for the sheep which the Father gave him, John x. 15, 29. This *giving*, therefore, must be connected with their election before the world. Thus it appears, that every thing relating to redemption takes place according to God's eternal purpose, or to a preconceived plan formed in his own mind from everlasting. Now, with regard to this divine plan we may observe,

1. That it must be a *perfect* and *complete* plan. It is the eternal purpose and determinate counsel of God, who had all things relating to it, not only present to his view at once, but in his design; and whose infinite wisdom could not fail to fix upon the best method and fittest means to accomplish all the ends he had in view. Human schemes, with regard to future things, are always imperfect and uncertain, because of the imperfection of men's knowledge and wisdom in forming them, and because they cannot provide against unforeseen emergencies, which often frustrate their best concerted measures: but as the divine plan is the result of infinite wisdom, and perfectly adapted to the attainment of its end, so

2. It must be a *fixed* and *unalterable* plan. God himself is unchangeable: he says, "I am the Lord, I change not," Mal. iii. 6. He is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,"

James i. 17. But this immutability does not merely respect his being and perfections, but also his counsels and purposes; for these are acts of his will, directed by his infinite wisdom, who also possesses almighty power to accomplish all his designs; accordingly he says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," Isa. xlv. 10—"The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," Psal. xxxiii. 11. Prov. xix. 21. The purpose of God according to election must stand, for it depends not on the uncertain will or works of men, but is of him that calleth, Rom. ix. 11. And God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the IMMUTABILITY OF HIS COUNSEL, confirmed it by an oath, Heb. vi. 17, 18. The omniscient and only wise God could learn nothing from experience, or repeated trials, so as to have occasion, upon further consideration or second thought, to alter or amend his eternal plan; nor did he rest any part of it upon contingencies, or upon mutable and uncertain grounds, which might possibly disconcert his scheme, or disappoint his expectations; for to him nothing is contingent or uncertain. Nothing can take place in time, but either by his permission or positive influence as he had before determined, and so falls within his plan, as some way connected with it, and subservient to it. Hence it follows,

3. That this plan was no way affected or deranged by the entrance of sin and death into the world, nor by all the natural and moral evils which have taken place among mankind in consequence of this. So far was this from being the case, that it was evidently *formed with a view to the fall of man*, and is a plan of salvation or redemption through Jesus Christ from the guilt and misery introduced by it. So that the entrance of sin

and death was subservient to the plan of redemption, as it gave occasion, and opened the way for its accomplishment. I remark,

4. That it was not a plan of universal redemption, comprehending the whole of the fallen race of Adam; but a plan of *sovereign* and *special* grace. It was a chusing of some unto salvation in distinction from others, though foreseen to be all in the same predicament. Where there are none left or rejected, there is no proper election; for that signifies a chusing or singling out of some from among others. And here it must be observed, that the purpose of election on the one hand, or of rejection on the other, did not respect men merely as *creatures*, but as *fallen guilty creatures*. Revelation does not directly inform us why God permitted sin to enter into the world; but the plan of redemption which he determined upon before the foundation of the world, demonstrates that he had this event in view. He foresaw the whole of mankind in a state of sin and rebellion against him, and so had a right either to deal with them all according to the demerit of their guilt, or, out of the same corrupt mass, to chuse some unto salvation in Jesus Christ, and to reject and punish others for their sins. This last is what in his infinite wisdom he has determined upon, for the display of his sovereign free grace on the vessels of mercy, and to make his power and justice known on the vessels of wrath, Rom. ix. 15—24. It cannot be shewn from scripture, that any are rejected purely by a divine decree which had no regard to their sins, by which they are fitted to destruction; but it can be clearly shown, on the other hand, that men are elected to salvation without any regard to their own righteousness, it being an election purely of grace. Rom. xi. 5, 6. and by the same grace they are

also prepared unto glory. Death is the just *wages* of sin; but eternal life is the free and unmerited *gift* of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 23.

5. In considering the plan of redemption, we must distinguish God's eternal purpose or determinate counsel from the actual existence or accomplishment of the things purposed, which all take place in their proper time and order according to that purpose. Some confound these things; because Christ was *fore-ordained* before the foundation of the world, 1 Pet. i. 20. therefore they think he was actually constituted mediator, or a prophet, priest, and king in eternity, before he was a man, and before there was any occasion for his mediation and the exercise of these offices. They affirm, that the elect were in Christ before they were in Adam, and that they were justified in the former before they had sinned or were condemned in the latter: and thus they make the actual execution of God's purposes, in their proper time and order, to be only the manifestation of what was actually done in eternity, which is contrary both to scripture and the nature of things. They represent the elect as having been eternally united to Christ, and justified from eternity; and argue this by distinguishing immanent acts of the divine mind from transient acts; the former not requiring the actual existence of the object as the latter does; and they apply this distinction to justification and sanctification. But granting justification to be an immanent act in the mind of God, yet no immanent act can actually free or absolve a man from guilt which does not exist. It can be nothing more than a purpose or determination to free him when he shall become guilty; and accordingly the scripture always represents sinners as actually justified when they believe. They think it inconsistent with God's everlasting and

unchangeable love to his elect, that they should ever have been in a state of condemnation. But this is to set the love of God and the manner of its exercise in opposition to each other. God's everlasting love to his elect was from the beginning exercised in purposing to save and deliver them from a state of condemnation, and and it was exercised in time in bringing this immutable purpose into actual execution. His everlasting and unchangeable love is *redeeming love*. Herein God commendeth and manifesteth it towards us. Rom. v. 8. 1 John iv. 9, 10. and was not this every way consistent with our being in a state which needed redemption? We come now to consider,

IV. *Lastly*. The ultimate end and design of the whole.

In entering upon this particular I would observe,
 1. That we ought to beware of ascribing any end to God but what he hath himself revealed. In many of his works of creation and providence we can indeed discern a chain of natural *causes* and *effects*, and we may say that such effects are the *immediate ends* of these causes; but as to the *ultimate end* of the whole, to which all these causes and effects are subservient, that is not a matter of *sense* but of *faith*. God alone knows what end he proposed to himself in his works, and we can only know it with certainty from revelation. 2. If God has been pleased to reveal his grand design in our creation and redemption, it is of the utmost consequence for us to know it, and to have it ever before us; because it casts light upon the whole of the divine character and dispensations—clears off that darkness which rests upon particular parts viewed detachedly—throws every lower and

subordinate end into its proper place—erects our views and elevates our minds to the noblest and best end of our existence—and directs us to pursue it as our chief aim, as it were in concert with God. Let us see then what discovery God hath made of his *ultimate end* or design in the whole scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ, and in his blessing us with all spiritual blessings in him.

Now all this is expressly declared to be, “That we should be to the praise of his glory,” Eph. i. 12, 14. The glory of God is the shining forth of his character or perfections in some representation or work. God is infinitely glorious in himself, independently of all his works, or of any display of his glory in and by them; but as he designed to display his glory, so he performed works suited to manifest it, and created intelligent beings capable of discerning it in that manifestation.

1. The manifestation of his own glory is the chief and ultimate end of all his works and ways, whether of creation, providence, or redemption, and all other ends are subordinate and subservient to this. All things were created not only *by* him but *for* him, Heb. ii. 10. Rom. xi. 36. “The Lord hath made all things for himself,” Prov. xvi. 4. His work of judgment upon Pharaoh and his subjects, was for this declared purpose, “That I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth,” Rom. ix. 17. His end in separating Israel for his people, and his peculiar kindness towards them, he expresses thus, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” Isa. xliii. 21. His punishing the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction is not his end, but to *shew his wrath* against sin, and to *make his power known*, Rom. ix. 22. for he created none merely for destruction,

nor has he pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in the display of his own glory. On the other hand, his end in saving the vessels of mercy is not merely their happiness, but that he might *make known the riches of his glory* on them, ver. 23.

2. His own glory is the highest and best end he could propose, because he is the highest and best of beings. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself," Heb. vi. 13. So, in this case, he could propose no higher end than himself. It became his infinite wisdom to propose the best of ends in all his works, and to make every other end subservient to that. It is the excellence of the ultimate design that ennobles and gives importance to every subordinate end. Therefore when intelligent creatures set up themselves, or any other creature as their chief and ultimate end, they rob God of his glory and live to themselves. In point of *justice*, God's glory ought to be the ultimate end of all; for all things are *of him* and *by him*, as their first cause, and so ought to be *to him*, and *for him*, as their last end, Rom. xi. 36.

3. God's glory shines forth in all his works and ways; but they do not all alike shew forth his glory. Some of them display one part of it, others another; in some it shines with faint and single rays, in others it beams forth in a whole constellation of glory, His *works of creation* give a magnificent display and demonstration of his eternal power and Godhead, Rom. i. 12. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work," Ps. xix. 1. His *works of providence*, in upholding, governing, and preserving all things, give an additional and increasing manifestation of his wisdom, power, and goodness. But it was reserved for the *work of redemption*, and the new constitution of

things thereby established, to give a complete, consistent, and satisfying display of the glory of God, and to this all the other displays of it are subservient. His *wisdom*, *power*, and *goodness*, are herein manifested in another manner than ever they were before. His *holiness*, *justice*, and *faithfulness*, are also magnified in the highest degree. But that which bears the capital figure, and which could not be discovered in creation or providence, is his sovereign *love*, and rich free *grace* and *mercy* to the guilty.

4. It is the *glory of the riches of his grace* that he more especially intends in the scheme of redemption. This in a particular manner is called his *glory*. When Moses besought him to shew him his *glory*, he proclaimed his name as “the Lord, the Lord God MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth,” Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. chap. xxxiv. 6. His shewing mercy to the guilty is termed his making known the riches of his *glory* on them, Rom. ix. 23. It is in mercy that he peculiarly delighteth, Micah vii. 18. and it is the glory of his mercy that he especially intendeth in all the spiritual blessings with which he has blessed us in Christ; for the apostle expressly declares, that it is “to the praise of the glory of his grace,” Eph. i. 6. “That he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus,” chap. ii. 7. And though grace could not flow to the guilty, but in the exercise of justice; yet so hath infinite wisdom contrived, that in the highest exercise of justice, there is the clearest display of grace; for hereby God commendeth it toward us, Rom. v. 8. The *worthlessness* of the objects of it—the *dignity* and *death* of him through whom it flows—and the greatness of the *blessings* conferred, are all so

amazingly adjusted as to unite in exalting sovereign free grace to the highest degree, and demonstrate that this was God's chief end in the whole. Indeed the exercise of his other perfections, and even his punishing the vessels of wrath, seem all subservient to this end, *viz.* to exalt and enthrone grace, that it might reign sovereignly through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, and on the whole to display this grand truth, that *God is love.*

From this doctrine we may learn,

1. That the salvation of the elect does not rest upon precarious grounds, or upon any thing which depends on the will of man; but is established on the sure foundation of God's eternal and immutable purpose, who cannot possibly be frustrated or disappointed in his designs, but who has declared that his counsel shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure. His purpose includes not only the end, but all the means, instruments, and events necessary to the attainment of that end; these, in all their vast variety, are so under his own management and direction, that he makes them work together for the accomplishment of what he intends.

2. God hath already accomplished the most wonderful part of his eternal plan, and which insures the completion of the whole in the final and everlasting salvation of his elect. He hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, clothed in the nature of the children whom he had given him to redeem. He spared him not, but, according to his determinate counsel, delivered him up to death as an atonement for their offences, and raised him again from the dead for their justification. He hath also exalted him to the highest glory, honour, and

dominion at his own right hand, and given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as he hath given him. Thus all spiritual blessings are procured and secured for them in Christ. Those of them whom he hath already called according to his purpose have received the remission of their sins, the adoption of children, the sanctification of the Spirit, by which they are also sealed unto the day of redemption, and have the earnest of the heavenly inheritance; and an innumerable company of the departed spirits of just men made perfect are now present with the Lord. If therefore God has already accomplished such a wonderful and important part of his plan, he will undoubtedly finish it, and accomplish what remains in the resurrection and eternal glorification of his people. Christ hath repeatedly promised to raise his people up at the last day, and that he will come again to receive them to himself, that where he is there they may be also. Indeed without this, it will be impossible to perceive any end worthy of God in all that he has already done for them, and particularly in giving the Son of his love to die for them. Justly then does the apostle argue, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Rom. viii. 32.

3. If God’s design in the plan of redemption be to “make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy,”—“that he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them,”—“that they should be to the praise of his glory,” Rom. ix. 23. Eph. i. 12. chap. ii. 7. then, what infinite grace may they expect from such a design! They can indeed give no reason why he should have chosen them more than

others that perish ; but they can give a good reason why he chose such utterly vile and worthless sinners as they, namely, that he might display and magnify the riches of his sovereign grace upon them. In this design they fully acquiesce, saying, “ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” But that which greatly heightens their joy in, and esteem of, the sovereign grace of God, is its consistency with his justice and holiness ; and this they discover in the work and mediation of Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. Here they see the grace of God in the most striking point of view, not as detached from his justice, but reigning through righteousness, and flowing freely to the guilty in the channel of the blood and wounds of his beloved Son. This leads them to glory only in the cross of Christ, and to place their confidence in the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain ; while at the same time it must fix upon their minds the deepest impression of God’s holiness, justice, and infinite hatred of sin.

4. Though the doctrine of eternal and personal election be clearly taught in the word of God ; yet no man can know his own election, but by the fruits of it in his effectual calling. All therefore who would enjoy the comfort of this doctrine in their own case, must attend to the apostle Peter’s exhortation : “ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Calling is here put before election, because it is in this order we come to the knowledge

of our election, or by ascending from the effect to the cause. The method he prescribes for making their calling and election sure is, to give all diligence, in adding to their faith virtue, (or courage) knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. He observes, that if these things be in them and abound, they shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and assures them, that if they do these things they shall never fall, but an entrance shall be ministered to them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. i. 5—12. Many deceive themselves with empty speculations about the gospel, whilst they are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ; such can have no evidence of their election, whatever they may presume; but those who are possessed of the forementioned fruits of the Spirit, and abound in the practical exercise of them, have evidence in themselves that they are the called and chosen of God. “We know,” says the apostle, “that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God,” 1 John iii. 14, 18, 19, 21. Paul, writing to the church of the Thessalonians, mentions their work of faith and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the evidence by which he knew their election of God, 1 Thess. i. 3, 4. Though the election, redemption, calling, perseverance, and final glorification of the saints are all inseparably connected in the divine plan;

yet no man can know his own particular election and final salvation, without the testimony of his conscience to his faith and its genuine fruits ; nor can he retain that knowledge, but while continuing in the faith, love, and obedience of the gospel. This doctrine, therefore, so far from encouraging presumption and slothfulness, must have the contrary tendency : for as no real believer can rest satisfied without some comfortable assurance of his own calling and election, he must necessarily be giving diligence to attain this, and also to retain it by shewing the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

5. *Lastly*, As God's end in our redemption is that we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace, Eph. i. 6, 12. let us actively concur with his design, by renouncing our own righteousness, and quitting every false ground of hope ; by giving him the glory of his grace, in grateful acknowledgments of it, as the original source of the whole plan and work of redemption ; by suitably esteeming, embracing, and honouring the Son of his love as his chief gift, in whom it hath pleased him that all fulness should dwell, and by placing unlimited confidence in his merits and mediation, both as the procuring cause and medium through which all the other blessings of grace are freely conferred upon his people. Further, as God designed, in electing his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame, before him in love, ver. 4. having from the beginning chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 13. and as it was also Christ's end in redeeming them, to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14.

let us also cheerfully and actively comply with this design, by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, 2 Cor. vii. 1. that we may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God; and having our constant dependence on his grace, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Philip. i. 10, 11. chap. ii. 13. To whom be praise and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON V.

THE PREFERABLE HAPPINESS OF BEING WITH CHRIST.



PHILIP. i. 21—24.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

WHEN the apostle wrote this epistle to the saints at Philippi he was a prisoner at Rome, and so was naturally led to anticipate the issue of his confinement, whether that should be his release or martyrdom. In either case he was prepared to meet the sentence, and expresses his earnest expectation and hope, that, through their prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he shall be enabled, as always, so now also, to bear a firm and undaunted testimony to the truth, and that Christ shall be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death: “For,” says he, “to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” As if he had said, The great end of my life in this world, and the only motive that could make me wish to live any longer in it, is to promote the cause of Christ; and should I die in that

cause, it will be to my own unspeakable advantage. But upon supposition that he had his choice either to continue sometime longer in the body, or to depart out of it, he finds himself pressed on both sides with such weighty considerations, that he is at a loss which to prefer: "Yet what I shall choose, I wot not: for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." In handling this passage we shall show,

I. The considerations which made the apostle hesitate in his choice.

II. What he means by being with Christ.

III. Why he prefers that to his abiding in the flesh. And,

IV. Make some use and application of the subject.

I. On the first of these heads it must be observed, that he had no difficulty in determining whether his life in this world, or his departure and being with Christ was to be preferred in respect of his own happiness; for he determines at once, and without the least hesitancy, that for him to depart, or (*αναλυσαι*) to be loosed from the body, and to be with Christ, was not only *better* than to abide in the flesh, but *far better*, or (*πολλω μαλλον*) *much more* so. So far then as the question respected his own personal happiness, he considered his dying as gain, and gives a decided preference to his being present with the Lord.

But his own immediate happiness was not the only consideration that occupied the apostle's mind on this occasion. He took also into his view the usefulness of his life in this world for promoting the cause of Christ;

and so he says, "To me to live is Christ." The service of Christ was the end and business of his life, and for which he had received grace and apostleship. His only motive to desire longer life was, that he might be instrumental in adding fresh laurels to his Master's crown: "If I live in the flesh," says he, "this is the fruit of my labour." His life in this world was not desireable for its own sake, or in a worldly view; for it was filled up with dangers, toils, and sufferings of various kinds. See 2 Cor. xi. 23—33. But, notwithstanding all he had already suffered, such was his love to Christ, his zeal for his honour, and concern for the advancement of his kingdom in the world, that he was willing to postpone his own personal happiness for a time; and not only so, but to undergo the greatest hardships for his sake. Like a good soldier, who, regardless of his own ease, is unwilling to retire from the field of action, however many wounds he may have already received in the conflict, whilst he has any prospect of being farther serviceable to his prince.

His love to Christ included in it love to the saints for his sake; and this affection made him willing to abide sometime longer in the body for their spiritual benefit. Though he was fully persuaded that to be with Christ was far better for himself; yet he adds, "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you; and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith," ver. 24, 25. It appears from this that the apostle had ground to expect his liberation at that time; and he rejoiced in the prospect of it, not for his own sake, but for theirs, whom he expected to reap the benefit of it. So generous and fervent was his love to the saints, and so much had he their spiritual

interest at heart, that however exalted his views were of heavenly happiness, however certain his prospect of enjoying it, and however ardent his desire after it; yet he was cheerfully willing to defer that enjoyment for some time longer, and to suffer affliction with the people of God for their furtherance and joy of faith. He frequently expresses his affection for the saints in the strongest terms: "God is my witness how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Christ," ver. 8. "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us," 1 Thess. ii. 8. "Yea, and if I be offered" or poured out as a libation, "upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all," Philip. ii. 17. So that he was willing either to live or die on their account, whichever of these might be most conducive to their spiritual advantage. This is an example of true brotherly love. Well might it be termed "the bowels of Christ;" for it exactly resembled the love with which Christ loved his people, who minded not his own things, but the things of others, Philip. ii. 4, 5.

Here then two things presented themselves to the apostle's consideration. One was the *usefulness* of his life, should it be continued some time longer, for promoting the service of Christ and the salvation of souls. The other was *his own immediate happiness* in departing and being with Christ. Between these two he was in a strait; for so equally did they balance one another in his mind, that he knew not which to choose, supposing them left to his option. But this very hesitancy discovers a noble and generous, and, at the same time, a sober and rational state of mind. It was noble and generous in him to hesitate a moment, whether he should choose to

continue longer in a state of labour and sufferings for the good of others, or to depart and be with Christ. There was no comparison between these two in respect of his own happiness, consequently the cause of his hesitation must have been his love and concern for others. It discovers also a sober and rational state of mind: he was not, as some pretend, so disinterested in his love to Christ and his people as to exclude all regard to, or consideration of his own happiness; for had that been the case, he could not have hesitated in his choice *between two*, if nothing but one thing fell under his consideration. But as he necessarily loved his own happiness, so he earnestly desired to depart and to be with Christ, which he esteemed far better than all that he could enjoy while in this mortal body. And though his desire of being useful to others made him willing to postpone that enjoyment; yet it was only for a time. He kept it still in view, and was animated and supported by the prospect of it under all his labours and sufferings in the cause of Christ, being fully persuaded that his labour was not in vain, and that his present trials and afflictions, which were but for a moment, worked for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. We shall now proceed to consider,

II. What the apostle means by being with Christ.

1. By this he certainly means something that was to take place *immediately* upon his departure, or being loosed from the body. He appears to have had no notion of an intermediate or middle state between his departure and his being with Christ, but connects the latter with the former as immediately succeeding it. This appears also from what he says, 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.—

“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” These words convey the idea of an immediate transition, and seem to admit of no intervening medium, either of state or time, between being absent from the body and present with the Lord. Christ represents Lazarus as transported immediately upon his death into Abraham’s bosom, Luke xvi. 22. and he informs the penitent thief, that on the very day of his crucifixion he should be with him in Paradise, chap. xxiii. 43.

2. To be with Christ imports a state of *conscious existence* and *sensibility*. Materialists maintain, that the human soul does not act, nor probably exist, separate from the body, and that at death, it is annihilated, or, at least, sinks into a dormant state of utter insensibility until the resurrection. But how could the apostle term annihilation or insensibility his being *with Christ*? He could not be with Christ unless he existed; and he could not possibly esteem annihilation or a state of insensibility to be *far better* for him than all the enjoyments and usefulness of his life in the body; but he prefers being absent from the body, and present with the Lord, to all these.

3. To be with Christ imports a state of *fruition* and *happiness*. This is also evident from its being the object of the apostle’s desire in preference to his life in the body. If he had no expectation of enjoying happiness till the resurrection, he could have no rational motive to make him desire to depart so long before that period which has not even yet arrived. The popish fiction of purgatory is not pretended to be a state of happiness, but of penance, and no Roman Catholic can seriously

prefer such a state to the enjoyments of this life. But the state the apostle had in view upon his departure from the body was the object of his *desire*, as being *far better* than all his enjoyments in this world, and therefore he must have had the prospect of enjoying immediate happiness. True, indeed, the happiness of departed saints will not be complete till the resurrection. Till then they are still waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body, Rom. viii. 23. for that is the time when death shall be destroyed, 1 Cor. xv. 26, 54. when the saints shall be fully recompensed, Luke xiv. 14. and when they shall receive the kingdom and crown, Matt. xxv. 34. 2 Tim. iv. 8. and to be *with Christ* frequently means their complete and ultimate happiness when Christ shall come again, and their bodies shall be redeemed from the grave. See John xiv. 3. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. 2 Thess. i. 6—11. Col. iii. 4. But the apostle here is speaking of what he expected on his *departure* from the body, and while *absent* from it, viz. to be *with Christ*, or *present with the Lord*, by which he must certainly intend a state of happiness. And this will further appear if we consider,

4. That to be with Christ signifies to be *in the place* where Christ is, that is, in heaven; for Christ hath ascended from this earth into heaven, and the heavens must receive him until the times of restitution of all things, Acts i. 10, 11. chap. iii. 21. To be in heaven always signifies to be in a happy state; for the saints receive their great reward in heaven, Matt. v. 12. But heaven signifies not merely a *state*, but a *place* of happiness; and as the manhood of Christ is not every where present, it must have a local residence there. Now the apostle expected, that, on his departure out of the body, he should be with Christ in that happy place

where his glorified humanity resides. This is what Christ hath given all his faithful followers to expect, "Where I am there shall also my servant be," John xii. 26. And for this he prays, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me," chap. xvii. 24. From all which it is evident, that the saints, upon their departure out of the body, shall go to the very same place where Christ now is, even to the happy mansions of his Father's house, where he hath ascended far above all heavens as their forerunner. There they shall enjoy his blissful presence and company; they shall see him as he is; abide for ever with him, without any more absence or distance, and participate of his happiness and glory. This is the heaven and happiness of the redeemed. Let us now enquire,

III. Why the apostle prefers being with Christ to his continuing in the body.

We have already anticipated several things which will sufficiently account for this preference; but it may be useful to consider this part of the subject a little more particularly. He preferred being with Christ to his continuing in the body,

1. Because in being with Christ he would be for ever set free from all the sorrows, afflictions, and infirmities of this mortal state. The children of God, while in the body, have their share of the various calamities common to the rest of mankind, and they have also afflictions peculiar to themselves. Afflictions may be considered as affecting either their body or mind.

(1.) The afflictions incident to their bodies are many, such as hunger, nakedness, sickness, pain, and distem-

pers of various kinds, and sometimes the cruelties of persecution for conscience sake. But when they depart and are with Christ, "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 16, 17. "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away," chap. xxi. 4. All the distresses and infirmities which affect, or have their seat in this mortal body, are put off with the body itself; and they shall never more inhabit the body of their humiliation till it is changed, freed from all the effects of the original sentence, Gen. iii. 17—19. and fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Son of God, Philip. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 42—55.

(2.) There are various evils in this imperfect state which more immediately affect the mind, and produce anxiety, vexation, fear, sorrow, and grief. Though real Christians, while in this world, enjoy peace with God, and even rejoice in hope of his glory; yet they have not at all times the same degree of peace and tranquillity of mind. Many things, both from the world without, and especially from their own corruptions within, break in upon the peace of their minds, and fill them at times with fear, sorrow, and disquiet: but no sooner are they loosed from this body of sin and death, and their connection with this world and its concerns is broken off, than they leave all their fears, cares, and sorrows behind them. The days of their mourning are ended; because every possible cause of grief is for ever removed. The sin and impiety of a wicked world shall no more distress

their minds. Like Lot in Sodom, they may have often been grieved with the filthy conversation of the wicked, having their souls vexed from day to day in seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. But when they are with Christ, they are for ever separated from such society; for there no unclean thing can enter. There no enemy has access to annoy them; no Satan to deceive or tempt them, or to wound and harass them with his fiery darts. But what most of all distresses the minds of the children of God in this world is the remains of indwelling sin in themselves. This made Paul groan to be delivered from this body of death, Rom. vii. 24. What groaning, weeping, watching, and wrestling has this cost them! What doubts, fears, sorrows, and distress of mind, has it occasioned them! But when they die in the Lord, they are made perfectly free from the remainder of indwelling sin, and are made perfect in holiness, which is essential to their perfection in happiness. In short, when believers are present with the Lord, they are delivered from all the evils and troubles of this life, whether natural or moral, whether affecting the soul or body, and whether arising from external or internal causes. But,

2. The apostle not only prefers being with Christ to all the evils and sufferings of this life, but also to the greatest happiness which all the enjoyments of this world could afford him. We must not suppose that he means only to say, "It is far better for me to depart and to be with Christ, than to be suffering so much affliction and distress in this world," for it would be saying too little for the happiness of being with Christ, to prefer it only to the miseries of this life; and he himself declares that these two states bear no proportion to or comparison with, each other: "For I reckon that

the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. Job, when under the pressure of great affliction, chose strangling rather than life, chap. vii. 15. and though nature shrinks at the thoughts of a dissolution, yet many, though destitute of Paul's hopes of a blessed futurity, have earnestly wished for death rather than endure their present afflictions, whether real or imaginary. Besides, had the apostle preferred being with Christ merely to the miseries of this life, it might admit of a doubt whether he would not have preferred a state of worldly happiness and prosperity to his being with Christ. But it is evident, not only from this passage, but from the whole tenor of Paul's life after his conversion, that he preferred being with Christ to all the enjoyments of this present world.

The principal objects of worldly enjoyment are riches, pleasures, and honours. These are things in which worldly men place their happiness, and they are either in possession of them, or are eagerly seeking after them, as objects suited to gratify their avarice, fleshly lusts, pride, or ambition; though without health of body and contentment of mind they can have very little enjoyment of them. But Paul esteemed being with Christ to be infinitely preferable to all worldly enjoyments. What were earthly *riches* to him in comparison of the better and enduring substance which he knew he had in heaven, and for which he actually suffered the loss of all things? What were all the gross and momentary *pleasures* of sense to him, when compared with the pure, spiritual, and everlasting pleasures that are at God's right hand? So little was his estimation of worldly *honour, fame, or dignity*, that he cheerfully submitted to dishonour, reproach, and contempt from the world,

for the sake of that honour which cometh from God only ; that glory, honour, and dignity, which he expected to receive when present with the Lord. To be with Christ was the object of his most ardent desire and joyful hope, for in this he placed his supreme happiness ; and the certain prospect of this made him not only contented, but rich in poverty ; and not only patient, but joyful in tribulation. So that none of those things which constitute the happiness of the covetous, the sensual, or the proud, could so much as excite the least desire in his heart after this life, when compared with the happiness of being present with the Lord.

3. His desire of being with Christ was greatly superior to all his attachments of natural affection or friendship. Such attachments have a stronger hold of a generous and virtuous mind than any thing which has yet been mentioned. To be taken away from the nearest and dearest relations, or to be separated from those with whom we are united in the most intimate and endearing reciprocations of affection and friendship, is a consideration which of all things earthly would bid fairest to stagger the resolution of a loving and affectionate heart, and create a reluctancy to leave this world. Paul was naturally a man of warm affections and great sensibility, consequently capable of strong attachments ; for Christianity does not eradicate the natural and social affections, but rather improves, regulates, and refines them. But then Christ was the supreme object of his affection, in the enjoyment of whom he placed his chief happiness. He loved Christ far before father or mother, brother or sister, and all earthly friends put together, and therefore esteemed it far better to depart and be with Christ than with them.

4. His love to the saints was still greater than all his

natural attachments, either to fleshly relations or friends. He loved them with the bowels of Christ and as his own soul, and so he endured all things for the elect's sake, that they might be saved; nay, he could with joy lay down his life in their service, and be poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and service of their faith, Philip. ii. 17. He delighted in their society and fellowship, and was comforted and refreshed by the mutual communication of their faith and his, Rom. i. 12. Could he then think of parting with the saints whom he loved on spiritual accounts, and in whose society and fellowship he had so much delight? Yes; "I have a desire," says he, "to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." He was indeed willing to deny himself that superior happiness for some time longer on their accounts; but then his love to the saints was but the consequence or fruit of his love to Christ. He loved them because of their relation to Christ and conformity to him. If therefore it was for Christ's sake, and as bearing his image, that he loved them, and had such delight in their society, how much more must he desire to be with Christ himself, the original and supreme object of his affection? Every thing that was delightful and lovely to him in the saints was derived from Christ, who is the pattern and source of all excellence; and if the imperfect resemblance of Christ in his people was so amiable and delightful to him, how much more must be the sight and enjoyment of the glorious original? But he had no cause of reluctancy in parting with the saints on earth; he was only going before them for a little time. He knew he should meet with them again in a happier world, and in the presence of the Lamb, where he and they should never more part.

5. Paul, without doubt, had much delight and enjoy-

ment in the ordinances of Christ's house in this world. He could say with the Psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" Psal. lxxxiv. 1. and he had the most delightful access to, and fellowship with God by the Spirit in observing the institutions of his worship; yet he preferred being with Christ as far better. In these ordinances he saw Christ, comparatively speaking, but darkly as through a glass, which was not to be compared to the enjoyment of seeing him face to face. They were significant and useful means for putting him in mind of Christ, and for edifying him in the faith, love, and hope of the gospel; but at the same time they put him in mind that he was as yet absent from the Lord, and that his complete happiness lay in being present with him. The language of all gospel ordinances is, that Christians, while in this world, have not yet attained, nor are already perfect either in holiness or happiness; and their end is gained just in proportion as they are made effectual in preparing us for, and in exciting our desires to be with Christ.

6. The life which Paul lived in the flesh was by the *faith of the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20. His *knowledge* of the unsearchable riches of Christ was extensive: his *faith*, or belief of the gospel, was strong, amounting to the full assurance of understanding; and this was accompanied with the *full assurance of hope* as to his own personal interest in the love of Christ, for he adds, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." Thus his mind was possessed of the strongest grounds of consolation, even while in the body. He was filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abounded in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit; so that he greatly rejoiced amidst manifold trials, and the conflicts of the Christian warfare, Rom. v. 2—6. chap viii. 31. to the end, 2 Cor. i.

4, 5. Still, however, he preferred being with Christ to all the joy and happiness of a life of faith and hope in this world. His faith was the confident persuasion of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. but to be with Christ was to receive the end of his faith, and the actual enjoyment of the unseen hoped-for things themselves. Here he walked by faith, and not by sight. Faith supplied the place of sight, or the immediate presence of the object, and hope that of the actual enjoyment of it; but they were not equivalent. It is still greater happiness to see the beloved object than to be persuaded of it, and to enjoy it than to hope for it. Faith and hope are well suited to receive all the happiness we can enjoy in this present state from the testimony and promises of the gospel; but it is their very nature to refer to objects not yet seen, and to good things not yet in possession. They both suppose that we have not yet attained, nor are already perfect, and, in short, that we are yet absent from the Lord. It must therefore be far better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, when faith shall lose itself in the sight, and hope in the fruition of the desired object. I shall only add,

7. That we have reason to believe that Paul was often favoured with the highest spiritual enjoyments which are vouchsafed to any of the saints in this world. There are special communications of the Spirit as the Comforter, which exceed the ordinary peace and joy of the people of God. When favoured with these special influences, their joy is made full, so that they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, John xv. 11. 1 Pet. i. 8. The apostle knew experimentally what it was to have the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, Rom. v. 5. and to enjoy the first fruits of the

Spirit, as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, Rom. viii. 23. 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13, 14. This high enjoyment seems to be not merely the lively faith and joyful hope of future happiness, but a present sensible earnest and foretaste of it; a prelibation of the very joys of heaven in kind, though not in degree. But however high the apostle's spiritual enjoyments were in this life, they were but the first-fruits and earnest of the heavenly inheritance, which served only to excite his earnest desire after the full and actual possession of it; and so he still prefers being with Christ as far better than the highest degree of spiritual happiness which he could enjoy while in this world. We shall now,

IV. Make some use and application of this subject.

1. In the apostle Paul we have a striking example of a truly Christian spirit, as to the ends he proposed to himself either in living or dying. His earnest expectation and hope was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it be by life or by death.

(1.) With regard to his living longer in the body, he says, "To me to live is Christ—If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour—To abide in the flesh is more needful for you." To promote the honour and cause of Christ, the conversion of sinners, and the edification of his body the church, were the only inducements which made him desire to live any longer in this world; the only purposes for which he reckoned his life valuable or desirable. Thus he was entirely devoted to Christ, crucified to the world, and dead to its lusts. None of all the enjoyments in which worldly men place their happiness could so much as raise in his mind the least desire to continue longer in the body: but his

supreme love to Christ, and to the saints for his sake, made him willing to protract his sufferings and services sometime longer in this world, not on his own account, but theirs.

Now this example is set before us, not as a matter of speculation or amusement, but for our imitation; and so he calls us to be followers of him, even as he also was of Christ, Philip. iii. 17, 20, 21. 1 Cor. xi. 1. True, indeed, there was something peculiar to him and the other apostles in respect of office. Every Christian is not called to preach the gospel publicly, much less to do the work of an apostle; but with regard to his great and constant aim in life, which was to promote the honour of Christ and the good of his people, and must ever be connected with self-denial and disconformity to this world, these things, being essential to true Christianity, were not peculiar to Paul; for he represents it as one great end of Christ's dying for all, "that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 15. Agreeably to this he says, "None of us," *i. e.* no real Christian, "liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7, 8. To *live unto ourselves* is to live as if we were our own lords and masters, and to set up self by making our own secular honour, ease, and pleasure, the chief end of our living in this world. To *live unto the Lord*, or unto him who died for us, is to consider ourselves as not our own proprietors, but the property of Christ, who has bought us with the price of his own blood, and so to be constrained both by his authority and love to aim singly at his honour, to devote ourselves

entirely to his service, and to glorify him with our bodies and spirits, which are his, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

Let us then examine ourselves on this head. Have we a desire to live longer in this world? From what motives, and to what end do we desire this? Is it from the love of life, and dread of death? This indeed is natural, but does not mark the Christian. Is it that we may live unto Christ, be devoted to his service, and, in our sphere, to promote his cause and interest in the world? Or does it arise from our attachment to the things of this world, and that we may live longer unto ourselves in the pursuit and enjoyment of them? Which ever of these is the case our conscience will tell us directly. There is no room for nice casuistry here: the point is plain and simple. We cannot be deceived here but by taking pains to deceive ourselves. What then does conscience say as to the motives and ends which influence our desire of living longer in this world? We have seen that the apostle's earnest desire and constant aim was to live unto Christ, and that Christ might be magnified in his body. Is it so with us? Perhaps it will be said, that we cannot expect to be like the apostle Paul. It is granted, that in respect of his office as an inspired apostle we cannot pretend to imitate him; but why may we not expect to be like him in the great essentials of true holiness? Do not we profess to have the same faith in Christ, and the same hope of glory that he had, consequently, to possess the same motives, and lie under the same obligations to holiness that he did? We surely cannot imagine that true Christianity has changed its nature; or that we have now got a dispensation to live to ourselves, or to affect the earthly life, more than he had. There is no way that leadeth unto life but the narrow way which Christ has prescribed

to his disciples; the old apostolic way of living unto Christ who died for us and rose again. If, like Paul, our great end and aim in life be not Christ, we cannot reasonably expect that our death, like his, will be gain; for there is nothing in all the word of God that leads us to presume that we shall live with Christ in the world to come, if we live to ourselves in this world.

(2.) Paul also declares his "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ," ver. 23. This desire he expresses in very strong language. See 2 Cor. v. 2—9. His desire did not terminate in death as its object. He did not desire death for its own sake; but the ultimate object of his desire was to be with Christ, which he knew could not take place till absent from the body; and therefore he desires to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord.

Let us also examine if it is the object of our desire to quit this mortal tabernacle, as soon as the Lord shall please to call us, that we may be with Christ? Do we esteem this far better than all present enjoyments? Do we count it our gain, and are we longing and waiting for it with wishful expectation? Or, on the contrary, do we feel a reluctance at the prospect of our departure? Do the thoughts of it damp our spirits, and make us melancholy? Are we yet in bondage through fear of death? And do we wish to banish it from our thoughts, or to put it far away as the evil day? If this is habitually the case with us there must be something wrong. It must be owing to our love of this present world; to our fear of death itself, and awful uncertainty as to its consequences; or to the coldness of our affection to Christ, and our having little relish for spiritual and heavenly enjoyments; that is, in short, to the strength of our attachment to this present life, and the

want or weakness of our faith, love, and hope respecting the life to come.

If we would know the state of our minds with regard to faith, hope, and love, let us try how we feel when seriously pressed with this question: "Do we desire, or are we even willing, to depart and to be with Christ?" If this is not the case in some degree, how are we crucified to the world, or strangers and pilgrims in it? In what sense are we forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of our high calling? Have racers no desire to reach the goal soon and obtain the prize? If we have not this desire in some degree, how can we be said to have our affections set on things above where Christ is? Do not men desire to obtain and enjoy the object of their affections? How else can we be said to have our conversation in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, to love his appearing, and to be waiting and looking for it as the blessed hope. Do not men wish soon to obtain what they are waiting and hoping for? Again, do we not profess to believe in Christ, and to be justified by faith in his blood, to have peace with God, and to rejoice in hope of his glory? Do we not profess to have the spirit of adoption, and to know our filial relation to God when we call upon him as our Father? Do we not bless God for having begotten us again to a lively hope of the heavenly inheritance, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? But how will these things consist with our being yet in bondage through fear of death, or with our having no desire to depart and to be with Christ? In short, if we are really what we profess to be, we must have some degree of this desire; for this is the language of our profession as

Christians. Let us therefore examine if it be the real language of our hearts.

2. This subject affords matter of the highest consolation to the children of God in the prospect of death. True, indeed, to those who are utterly uncertain where they shall take up their everlasting abode, or are under fearful apprehensions of future misery, the prospect of death must be exceedingly terrible : and it must also be admitted, that death itself, abstract from the consideration of its consequences, has something in it which is awful and abhorrent to nature. But the doctrine of our text converts the king of terrors into a messenger of peace to the believer. It is here represented as a departure from the body to be with Christ. It is a passage from mortality to eternal life ; a transition from a state of absence, imperfection, and sorrow, to a state of glory, honour, and immortality in the presence of the Lord. In this view, death is not only stripped of all its terrors, but must appear desirable : “ having,” says the apostle, “ a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better—to me to die is gain.” Writing to the believing Corinthians, he says, “ all things are yours,” and, among other blessings, he mentions *death*, 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. which though it was the curse denounced upon the first transgression, is by Christ converted into a real blessing to the people of God : and this is represented as solemnly declared by a voice from heaven : “ Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them,” Rev. xiv. 13. Christ has expiated sin, which is the sting of death ; he hath satisfied the law, which is the strength of sin by its penal sanction ; and he has risen victorious from the grave, having abolished death as to every thing in it which is

really hurtful to his people, and so has left it nothing to do but the kindly office of setting them free from their earthly tabernacles, that they might be present with himself. He hath also promised that he will raise up their bodies from the grave, at the last day, and fashion them like unto his own glorious and immortal body. Then shall they bear the complete image of the heavenly man in their whole persons, and receive their full and eternal reward.

3. *Lastly*, This subject presents us with the strongest motives and inducements to diligence and persevering activity in the service of Christ. The ultimate and highest happiness of the Christian consists in being with Christ, in seeing him as he is in his glory, and in being made like him, 1 John iii. 2. This therefore must be the object of the believer's earnest desire and hope; and as this happiness, though procured by Christ, and secured for all the elect, is promised only to those who love and obey him, it must be one of the most powerful motives to that obedience; and so it is constantly set before Christians, not in the form of an absolute promise to them however they live, (which might encourage presumption, or slothful security,) but as a consequence or reward of their faith and obedience, and with a view to encourage and animate them to diligence in the service of Christ. In this view Christ sets it before us; "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour," John xii. 26. It is by the great reward in heaven, as well as by the danger of coming short of it, that he constantly urges a compliance with his sayings, both as they regard the temper of the heart, and the conduct of the life. It is by the promise of this that he encourages his disciples to deny them-

selves, and to take up their cross and follow him. The Christian life in this world is frequently compared to a race and warfare, and the great encouraging motive to activity and perseverance in this running and fighting, is the heavenly prize and crown of righteousness, 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. As there can be no conformity to Christ without this motive, so, on the other hand, it must operate effectually on all who firmly believe it, or are really possessed of it; for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. and it is only in perfecting holiness in the fear of God, that he arrives at the full assurance of hope, or has the solid evidence, that when he is absent from the body he shall be present with the Lord. I shall conclude with the use which the apostle makes of the doctrine of the resurrection of the just: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor, xv. 56.

SERMON VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION.



2 COR. v. 18, 19.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ: and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

THE divine scheme of salvation, through a crucified Saviour, is unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

We can have no true knowledge of God at all, if we do not know him to be infinitely opposed to, and averse from all sin and moral impurity; and we can have as little knowledge of ourselves, if we do not know that we are sinners, and consequently the objects of his just displeasure. One would think that these first principles would be readily admitted by all who acknowledge the Scriptures to be the word of God, and that they needed nothing more to convince them of the necessity of an

atonement, or expiatory sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice for their sins: but this is far from being the case with many. Men are ingenious to find out a thousand inventions to quiet their conscience before they submit to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel.

Some look upon their sins as too trivial to deserve everlasting punishment, and think a reformation of their lives may very well be accepted of by God, as a sufficient atonement for all they have done amiss. Others deny that there is any thing in the divine nature or government which necessarily requires the punishment of sin. They think it depends entirely on the will of God, whether he shall punish transgressors of his law, or clear the guilty without any satisfaction to his justice; and, having denied that an atonement was necessary to expiate sin, they proceed to deny that Christ hath made an atonement for it by his death. There are also a class of free-grace opposers of the true grace of God, who take such an abstract view of God's everlasting love, as to supersede in a great measure the necessity of the atonement. They cannot see how it consists with this love that the elect should become liable to the curse of the law, or fall into a state of condemnation, so as to be children of wrath even as others; and therefore think there was no occasion for the death of Christ to redeem them from the curse of the law, the wrath to come, or to satisfy divine justice; for they imagine God was never displeased with his elect, nor was there any wrath or curse against them. So that the love of God which they have in their view is not the grace of God manifested in the gospel, which respects guilt and wretchedness; it is not that love of God which he commends towards his enemies, in giving his Son to die for them, Rom. v. 8—10. In short, it is not *redeeming* love and grace; but seems rather to comport with his love to the elect angels,

who never sinned. Some, indeed, do not follow out these principles to their full length, but this only involves them in the greater inconsistencies ; hence we shall find them affirming and denying the same thing by turns. To deny that God was ever offended with his people, or required satisfaction for their sins, is, in fact, to deny the gospel doctrine of reconciliation altogether. I shall therefore,

I. Premise a few things to shew the necessity of this reconciliation, as well with respect to God as to the sinner.

II. Shew how God reconciled the world to himself.

III. Answer some of the chief objections against this doctrine. And,

IV. Consider the design of the ministry of reconciliation.

I. The necessity of this reconciliation appears,

1. From the *state* and *condition* of fallen mankind in relation to God. Though man was created originally upright, and in a state of friendship with his Maker ; yet soon did he depart from his allegiance, and rebelled against him. This was not only the case with Adam, by whom sin entered into the world, Rom. v. 12. but with all his descendents, who became wholly corrupt and depraved in their dispositions, rebellious in their practices, and enemies to God in their minds by wicked works ; so that God, upon a survey of the whole human race, declares, “ that there is none that doeth good, no not one,” Rom. iii. 12. that “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” ver. 23. and that the whole world are become (*ὑποδυνος*) subject to his judgment, or condemning sentence, as the word signifies, ver. 19. In this situation men are under the *power* and

dominion of sin and moral depravity, which is opposite to God's moral perfections, and so must be infinitely hateful to him. And as they are enemies to him, and rebels against him who is their Creator, Lawgiver, and Sovereign, they, of consequence, are lying under the *guilt of sin*, which is the obligation to punishment on account of it, and this connection betwixt sin and its punishment is founded as well in the nature of God, and his invariable measures of government, as in our relation and obligations to him as his creatures and subjects. Which leads me to observe,

2. That the *nature of God*, and his *moral government* of the world make this reconciliation necessary. I would not be mistaken; I do not mean that God has any need, for his own sake, to be reconciled to sinners. He is infinitely happy in himself, independent of his creatures, and might be sanctified in their everlasting punishment; but then, if, out of his sovereign free grace and mercy, he purposed to save a number of guilty rebels, there was an absolute necessity that this should be done in a way consistent with the perfections of his own nature, and reconcileable with the measures of his government.

(1.) God is a being possessed of infinite *holiness* and spotless *purity*, Isa. vi. 3. the heavens are not pure in his sight—he charges his angels with folly—and cannot look upon sin. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all, 1 John i. 5. This essential holiness of his nature is the glory and beauty of all his perfections, and necessarily implies his infinite opposition to, and hatred of all sin and moral impurity, and so must dispose him to punish it. Hence we find that both the denunciation and execution of his judgments upon sinners are represented as manifestations of his *holiness*, Exod. xv. 10, 11.

1 Sam. vi. 20. Isa. vi. and that by which he *sanctifies himself* in them, Numb. xx. 13. Ezek. xxviii. 22. chap. xxxviii. 22, 23. How then can guilty and polluted sinners expect to enjoy his favour without some wonderful expedient that may reconcile it to his holiness?

(2.) He is a God of infinite *justice* or *righteousness*, and therefore must govern his rational subjects with the strictest equity, for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? All his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he, Deut. xxxii. 4. He hath declared that he will render unto every one according to their works, and will by no means clear the guilty. It is therefore essential to divine justice to punish sin according to its demerit, as well as to reward the righteous. To suffer sin to pass with impunity would be to deny himself. If he did not demonstrate his justice in the punishment of sin, how could it appear that he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, or that the sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness? His long-suffering has been construed by wicked men to imply not only his ignorance of, or unconcernedness about the affairs of the world, and his indifference to good and evil, but even his approbation of their sin, Ps. i. 21. Eccl. viii. 11. Rom. ii. 4. But though he bear long, he will at last vindicate the honour of his law and government: the wicked shall not be unpunished, Prov. xi. 21. for “vengeance is mine, and I will recompence, saith the Lord,” Heb. x. 30. In his law he hath denounced a curse upon every one that continueth not in all things written therein to do them, Gal. iii. 10. and “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil,” Rom. ii. 8, 9. It is impossible that these threatenings should fall to the ground. His holiness, justice, and truth, are all con-

cerned to make them good to the utmost extent. Now, when we take a view of our own guilt as transgressors of the divine law, how shall we reconcile it with his justice and truth to pardon and acquit us without an adequate satisfaction that might make it just with him to justify the ungodly?

(8.) The scriptures represent God as *angry* and *displeased* with men on account of their sin and rebellion against him, Job iv. 9. Ps. lxi. 24. Rom. i. 18. Col. iii. 6. Heb. x. 27. By anger in God we are not to understand that passion and perturbation of mind that takes place in weak mortals; but the steady and uniform opposition and repugnancy of his nature and government to all manner of sin. The effects of divine anger must be more dreadful than all which the combined rage of men and devils can inflict. The Psalmist asks, "Who knows the power of thine anger?" Ps. xc. 11. and the prophet puts the question, "Who can stand before his indignation?" Nah. i. 6.

This wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. i. 18. It was revealed against the sin of the first man, Gen. iii. 16—20. and in the direful effects of it upon his offspring, Rom. v. 18. It was revealed against the old world of the ungodly, 2 Pet. ii. 5.—against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 6.—against the Egyptians, Exod. xv. 7. and the Canaanites, Deut. ix. 3—6.—and against his own rebellious people in the many judgments he inflicted upon them, and at last when his wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Then he made his power known on those vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, Rom. ix. 22. And though his wrath should not be revealed in temporal judgments, yet he is angry with the wicked every

day, Psal. vii. 11. his wrath abideth upon unbelievers, John iii. 36. and will come in its full extent upon the children of disobedience, Eph. v. 6. when he shall reveal his righteous judgment upon those who have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, Rom. ii. 5.

God's anger and displeasure was even against those whom he purposed to save; for, (1.) They as well as others have fallen in Adam—have sinned and come short of the glory of God, Rom. iii. 23. and were by nature children of wrath even as others, Eph. ii. 3. (2.) The law of God denounceth the curse upon all sinners without exception, Gal. iii. 10. The law, in this case, cannot be considered abstract from the Law-giver, any more than sin can be considered abstract from the sinner; it can neither command, promise, nor threaten, but as it is the voice of God. (3.) The conscience of an awakened elect person agrees with the law, that he is a sinner—that God is angry with him—that he deserves punishment, and is liable to have it inflicted. Is this only a deceitful feeling? Has not this conviction a foundation in the nature of God—the condition of the sinner—and the open declaration of the law? (4.) The gospel enforces the conviction of guilt and danger, by laying open the spirituality of the law—the guilt and depravity of the sinner—the holiness of God in opposition to all sin—and his vindictive justice in punishing it on his own Son, as the substitute of the guilty. (5.) The salvation of the elect is declared to be a *salvation from wrath*, Matt. iii. 7. Rom. v. 9. 1 Thess. i. 10. which shews that they had incurred wrath and were obnoxious to it, or how could they be delivered from it? If there was no wrath against the elect, what was it that Christ suffered for them? We cannot, therefore, hold the grace of the gospel, wherein

the love of God is so conspicuously displayed, without, at the same time, seeing that our God is a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29. These hints serve to shew the necessity of a reconciliation as well with respect to God as the sinner. We were polluted with sin, and enemies to God. The holiness and justice of God's nature and government were opposed to us in that situation, and his wrath was revealed against us. If therefore God intended to save any of the human race, it must be in the way of obtaining satisfaction for their sins; it must be in such a way as to manifest his infinite holiness and hatred of sin, and his inflexible justice in punishing it. But how this could be effected consistently with the salvation of sinners, must have for ever puzzled the whole creation, had not infinite wisdom found out the wonderful expedient: and blessed be God who hath revealed it unto us in the gospel. This leads me to the second thing proposed, *viz.* to shew,

II. How, or by what method, God hath reconciled the world to himself.

1. GOD here particularly means God in the person of the Father, who, in the economy of redemption, sustains the majesty, vindicates the honour, and maintains the claims of the one Godhead, whilst his incarnate Son sustains the office, and acts the part of mediator between him and guilty man, as I shall afterwards more fully shew.

2. By the WORLD, we are here to understand, not every individual of the human race; but all of every nation whom he had, from everlasting, elected to life eternal; and these are termed the *world*, in opposition to the Jewish limitation, who confined the salvation of

God to themselves, in distinction from the Gentile nations. This extensive expression agrees with the promise made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. Thus Abraham was made the father of many nations, and heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13, 17. Yet we are expressly told, that the true children of Abraham, who are blessed with him, and heirs according to this promise, are only "they who are of faith, and the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 7, 9, 26, 29,

3. To RECONCILE (*καταλλάσσω*) signifies to *change* the state of matters betwixt parties at variance, by removing the grounds of difference. Disagreement always implies some error or fault on one side or other, for while both parties are right there can be no disagreement. Among men differences often arise from mutual injuries, in which case, mutual satisfaction or redress ought to be given in order to a reconciliation. But when the difference is between God and his creature man, as in the present case, man alone must necessarily be in the wrong; because it is impossible that God should, in any instance, act contrary to the eternal, immutable, and essential rectitude of his own nature. And as in justice it belongs to the offending party to make satisfaction or reparation to the party offended, who has an undoubted right to demand it; hence it follows, that it belonged to us to reconcile ourselves to God, by making satisfaction to him for our rebellion against him, who is our Maker, our rightful Lawgiver, and Judge, and who has declared absolutely that he will not clear the guilty.

But how is it possible for us to make the least reparation to him for our offences? Shall we do it by yielding a perfect obedience to his law in future? Alas! in our present corrupt state, we are utterly incapable of

this. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be; so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," Rom. viii. 7, 8. But admitting the impossible supposition, that we were able to obey his law perfectly in time to come, this could never make reparation for past offences; because perfect obedience is due from us at any rate though we had never sinned, and therefore cannot go to the extinction of former transgressions, or satisfy for the least offence. Death, under the divine malediction, is the wages of sin, Rom. vi. 21, 23. and "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. This is the sanction of the divine law, the penalty which we have already incurred, and the indispensable claim of divine justice upon us. The question then still returns, How shall we answer or satisfy it? To endure the punishment of our sins in our own persons would be inconsistent with our salvation; for as our temporary sufferings could never make adequate satisfaction, so our punishment must be endless, as the torments of the wicked are declared to be, Matt. xxv. 46. Wherewith then shall we reconcile ourselves unto God? "Shall we come before him with burnt-offerings, or calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall we give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Micah vi. 6, 7. All these would be entirely unavailable to please the Lord, or to procure our reconciliation. No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever, as to any thing that man can do, Psal. xlix. 7, 8. As therefore there is no reconciliation to God, but by

means of satisfaction made to his law and justice for our sins, and as it is utterly impossible for us to make that satisfaction, how then can we be reconciled to him? A question this, which of all others is the most important and interesting; but which at the same time would have remained unanswered, had not God been pleased to solve it: and this he hath done by the glorious gospel, and particularly in the words of our text, which declare, "That God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Let us therefore consider them attentively. And we may observe,

1. That though it belonged to us, who were the offending party, to reconcile ourselves unto God, and to make the first advances by making reparation for our offence; yet as we never could do this, God himself, the very party against whom we had offended, hath, out of his own infinite wisdom and unmerited grace, contrived a method to reconcile us to himself, wherein his justice and holiness are fully displayed and glorified, more than they would have been in our everlasting destruction. That God, the offended party, should thus make the first advances; provide for himself a satisfaction to all his demands upon us, and raise us, guilty sinners, to higher happiness than if we had never offended; this is such a wonderful display of wisdom and grace as passeth all finite knowledge. Well may we cry out with David, "And is this the manner of man, O Lord God!" Our reconciliation then originated with God, and is entirely owing to his undeserved, unexpected, and unsolicited love and grace. It is God that hath reconciled us to himself. Let us consider,

2. The person by whom he hath reconciled the world to himself. The text informs us that it was (*ev*) *in*, or

rather *by Christ**, as it is expressed, ver. 18. "who hath reconciled us to himself ($\delta\iota\alpha$) by Jesus Christ;" also in Col. i. 20. "and ($\delta\iota\alpha$) *by* him to reconcile all things to himself." It was therefore by the mediation of his Son that our reconciliation was effected; and yet it was God the Father that reconciled us, because it was he that sent his Son into the world, appointed him to that work, supported him in going through with it, and accepted him in it on our behalf. But it deserves a more particular consideration,

3. How it was that God reconciled the world to himself by Christ. The apostle tells us, verse 21. that it was by his *making him sin for us*. To be *made sin* for us cannot mean that he was made *sin itself* for us, for that is the transgression of the law: nor does it mean that he was made a *sinner* for us by any sin of his own, or by a transfusion of our sins into his heart or life; for such a supposition is not only blasphemous, but absurd and impossible. Besides, it is expressly said, that he knew no sin. The expression is elliptical, and signifies, that God hath made him a sacrifice for our sins. The apostle takes this expression from the Old Testament,

* Some think the words ($\epsilon\nu$ $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega$) *in Christ*, import, that God, or the Trinity, was dwelling *in Christ* when reconciling the world to himself; but whatever truth may be in this, it is not what the apostle is here stating. He had said in the verse immediately preceding, that God "hath reconciled us to himself ($\delta\iota\alpha$) *by*" or *through* "Jesus Christ;" see also Col. i. 20. and in this 19th verse, he is repeating the same thing as the sum of the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was " ($\epsilon\nu$) *by* Christ reconciling the world to himself;" for when the cause, manner or instrument is denoted, the preposition $\epsilon\nu$ bears the same sense as $\delta\iota\alpha$. Thus in 1 John v. 6. we have $\delta\iota\alpha$ once, and $\epsilon\nu$ twice, but all are translated *by*. So God is said to judge the world ($\epsilon\nu$) "*by* that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31. and of Christ it is said, "For ($\epsilon\nu$) *by* him were all things created," Col. i. 16.

where, both in the original and in the LXX, the sin-offering is termed *sin**. Thus the law of the sin-offering is termed *the law of sin*, Lev. vi. 25.—the bullock for a sin-offering, *the bullock of sin*, Lev. iv. 8, 20. Exod. xxix. 36.—the goat sacrificed for sin, *the goat of sin*, Numb. vi. 11. chap. viii. 12. To make a beast a sin-offering, is to *make it sin*, Lev. iv. 20. When therefore the apostle says that Christ was *made sin for us*, he is using the sacrificial style of the law, and means that he was made a sin-offering for us, or a sacrifice for our sins, by dying as our substitute, or in our stead, to make an atonement unto God for our sins.

Agreeably to this, we are said to be reconciled to God *by the death of his Son*, Rom. v. 10. *by his cross*, Eph. ii. 16. *by the blood of his cross*, Col. i. 20. Thus it was that he made *reconciliation* for the sins of his people, Heb. ii. 17. The word used here (*ιλασμομαι*) signifies to *propitiate*, *appease*, or *atone* for their sins, which is precisely the same idea with *making satisfaction unto God for them*. And, indeed, without this idea we can have no proper notion of a sin-offering at all.

Let us consider how Christ was qualified to be an effectual atoning sacrifice for our sins. And, (1.) He was a *divine person*, and so possessed of infinite dignity

* Some affirm, that *αμαρτια* in) absolutely, or by itself, doth no where in Scripture signify a *sacrifice for sin*; and that the LXX always use *περι αμαρτιας* to denote a *sin-offering*, unless they name the sacrifice. But this I apprehend is a mistake; for of the *sacrifice for sin*, or, which is the same, the *sin-offering*, it is absolutely and repeatedly affirmed that, *αμαρτια εστι*, *it is sin*. See the LXX, Lev. iv. 21, 24. chap. v. 9, 12. If it be said that the sacrifice is named in the foregoing part of these verses, the same may be said of Christ who is repeatedly mentioned immediately before, and referred to in the passage under consideration as the person who was *made sin*.

and worth. He that by himself purged our sins, was he that made the worlds, Heb. i. 2, 3. It was God that laid down *his* life for us, 1 John iii. 16.—that purchased the church with *his own* blood, Acts xx. 28. Had he been a mere creature, though one of the highest order, his death could not answer the demands of divine justice, or give a full display of God's infinite holiness and indignation against sin. It could not be an adequate redemption price for the world ; because there is no proportion between the sufferings of *one* mere creature and the redemption of *us all* ; nor could we infer from such a manifestation of the love of God, that he would also freely give us *all things* with him, Rom. viii. 32. It was the divine dignity and worth of the sufferer that gave an infinite value and efficacy to his sacrifice, and it is this that magnifies the justice and holiness of God to the utmost in his opposition to sin, and which especially enhances his love towards guilty sinners to the highest degree.

(2.) He was also possessed of the *nature of man*, and partook of the same flesh and blood with the children whom God had given him, Heb. ii. 14. In the divine nature alone he could not represent them, nor suffer for them ; and though he had suffered in another created nature, yet he could not represent them ; for there is no relation between the sufferings of one created nature and the sin of another. The sacrifices of beasts are no exception to this ; for they could never take away sin : God was not well pleased with them, Heb. x. 4—6. It was man that had sinned, and it behoved man to suffer. For this purpose, therefore, a body was prepared him, ver. 5. and he was made of a woman of the seed of Abraham ; made under the law which we

had broken, and by which we were cursed and condemned, that he might redeem us from that curse by bearing it for us, Gal. iv. 4, 5. chap. iii. 13, 14.

(3.) He was perfectly *free from sin*, or the least spot or taint of moral impurity. The sacrifices under the law were to be without spot or blemish, otherwise they would not be accepted of the Lord, as sacrifices for the people, Lev. xxii. 19—26. Mal. i. 8—14. So the apostle here, speaking of Christ as a sin-offering, mentions it as an essential qualification, that he *knew no sin*. Agreeably to this, he is said to offer himself, through the eternal Spirit *without spot* to God, Heb. ix. 14. And we are said to be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb *without blemish and without spot*, 1 Pet. i. 19. Had he been stained with sin, his sufferings would be due for himself, and could not be reckoned to our account, or accepted for us.

(4.) When it is said, God (*ἐποίησεν*) *hath made* him sin, it imports, 1. That the Father hath *appointed* and *constituted* him a sin-offering. Accordingly when he comes to offer himself for sin, he says to his Father, “Lo, I come to do *thy will*, O God,” Heb. x. 7, 10. and he tells the Jews that he had received *a commandment* from his Father to lay down his life for the sheep, John x. 17, 18. The sacrifices under the law were all of divine institution, otherwise they could not be proper sacrifices at all, nor accepted of God as such, and to offer them would have been only will-worship and superstition. To seek to please God in any other way than he hath appointed would be only an aggravation of guilt, as in the case of human sacrifices, Lev. xx. 1—6. Had Abraham attempted to offer his son without the divine command, it would have been a most unnatural species of murder. Whatever other qualifications

Christ might have as a sin-offering, yet unless he had been ordained and constituted such by the Father, his death could be no atonement for sin, nor accepted as such; it could be no obedience to the will of his Father, unless he had required it at his hand; for Christ was under no natural or necessary obligation to die for sin. The obligation was founded solely on the will and sovereign grace of God, who constituted him a sacrifice, and appointed him to die for sinners. This obligation to punishment which the Father laid upon him, and which he voluntarily came under, is what I understand by the imputation of sin. 2. His being made (*ἁμαρτίαν*) *sin*, implies his having the *punishment* of sin inflicted on him. As he could not suffer for sin without coming under an obligation to do so; so neither could he come under that obligation without discharging it. Christ's death, therefore, cannot be considered merely as the death of an innocent person suffering for righteousness sake at the hands of sinners, but also as the death of one suffering the punishment of sin at the hands of a righteous judge. The sin-offering was instituted *to bear the iniquities* of the congregation, to make atonement for them, Lev. x. 17. *Iniquity* or *sin* is often in scripture put for the *punishment* of sin, Gen. iv. 7. chap. xix. 15. Psal. xlix. 5. and to *bear sin* or *iniquity*, is an Hebraism for *suffering the punishment* of sin, Lev. xx. 20. chap. xxii. 9. xxiv. 15, 16. Ezek. xviii. 17—20. The translators sometimes render this phrase *punishment*, as in Gen. iv. 13. Ezek. xiv. 10. And in this sense Christ as the sin-offering is said to *bear sin* or *iniquity*, as in Isa. liii. 11, 12. Heb. ix. 28. 1 Pet. ii. 24. from which passages we see that it was by pouring out his soul unto death, and suffering on the cross that he bore sin. His death is expressly declared

to be of the nature of (*καταρα*) a curse, Gal. iii. 13. This is never affirmed of the sufferings and death of believers; but is strongly expressive of the penal sanction of the law inflicted by a righteous judge on criminals or malefactors. Christ then was made an execration in his death, by enduring the divine malediction for sin. He suffered from the hands of his heavenly Father as a sin-avenging God. Thus it is said, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him, he hath put him to grief," Isa. liii. 10. He calls the sword to awake against his Shepherd, and smite the man his fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. And when we consider that dreadful amazement, horror, and agony which he endured in his soul in the garden, when as yet there was no human hand upon him, to what shall we ascribe it, but to a sense of the divine displeasure against sin, which made his heart to melt like wax in the midst of his bowels? Can we think it was simply the fear of men, who could only kill his body, that filled him with such agony? This would be making him to come short of the exhortation which he gave his disciples, Matt. x. 28. and represent his example under sufferings as less perfect than many of his followers, who, with undaunted resolution and joy, have laid down their lives for his sake. But as it would be blasphemy to suppose this, we must admit that there was some peculiar ingredient in his sufferings that made them so exquisite and intolerable; and what could this be but that *forsaking of his God* which he complains of, whose favour was dearer to him than life, and that *sense of his displeasure against sin* poured into his soul, which was infinitely worse than all bodily torments to such a loving Son? 3. When it is said, he hath made him sin (*υπερ ημων*) for us, it shews that the punishment he

endured for sin was *vicarious* and *substitutional*. It was not for himself that he was cut off, nor for his own sins, for the text tells us, *he knew no sin*; but it was *for us*, for our sins. So Jehovah himself testifies, Isa. liii. 8. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken;" and the prophet expressly declares, that it was *for our* transgressions he was wounded, *for our* iniquities he was bruised, for *our peace* he was chastised, ver. 5. The sin-offerings were substituted victims in the room of the guilty, and slain for their sins; and the whole New Testament holds forth Christ's death in this substitutional view. Thus he is said to have died *for* the ungodly, Rom. v. 6.—to have died *for us* while we were yet sinners, ver. 8.—to have died *for our sins*, according to the scriptures, 1 Cor. xv. 3.—to have suffered for sins the just *for* the unjust, 1 Pet. iii. 18. These and such like passages clearly shew, that Christ not only died, but died as a substitute—not only as a substitute, but as *our* substitute, and for *our* sins. Without this his death could be of no more advantage to us than to fallen angels. In short, his death must have been intended to meet the claims, and satisfy the demands of divine justice upon *us*, otherwise it could have no influence upon our reconciliation to God; nor would there be any connection betwixt his chastisement and our peace, his stripes and our healing, Isa. liii. 5.

It is clear that the sacrifices under the law adumbrated or prefigured the sacrifice of Christ, and therefore serve to illustrate the doctrine of the atonement. The apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews declares, that the law had a *shadow* of good things to come; and this he specifies particularly in its sacrifice, chap. x. 1—5. He points out the correspondences between those typical sacrifices, and that of Christ the great antitype;

and while he shews the vast disparity, to set forth the superior excellence of the latter in point of worth, efficacy, and extent, he, at the same time, traces an exact analogy between them, as to the main design of their respective appointments. The Hebrew word for *atonement* is *COPHER*, which, as a verb, literally signifies *to cover*, and, as a noun, *a covering*. In relation to the *party offended*, it signifies to pacify, to appease, or render him propitious, Gen. xxxii. 20. Ezek. xvi. 63. When applied to *sin* or *offence*, it signifies to cover or expiate it, to atone or make satisfaction for it, Ps. xxxii. 1. Lev. xvi. 30. When applied to the *sinner himself*, it imports his being covered or protected from punishment, and is rendered a ransom or atonement for him, Exod. xxi. 30. chap. xxx. 12, 15. But as the apostle wrote in Greek, so, in treating of Christ's sacrifice, he uses the very same terms which are applied to the legal sacrifices in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament* ; and represents it not only as a real and

* To instance in a few particulars : the general name *θυσια*, *sacrifice*, is applied to both, Lev. xvii. 5, 8. with Heb. ix. 26. The sin-offering is elliptically termed *αμαρτια*, *sin*, and *περι αμαρτιας*, *for or concerning sin*, Lev. iv. 20, 24. chap. xvi. 5. So Christ is said to be *αμαρτιαν ποιησεν*, *made sin*, 2 Cor. v. 21. and *περι αμαρτιας*, *for sin*, Rom. viii. 3. The ram that was slain for sin is called *κρως του ιλασμου*, the *ram of atonement*, or of *propitiation*, Numb. v. 8. Christ also is termed *ιλασμος*, the *atonement* or *propitiation* for our sins, 1 John ii. 2. chap. iv. 10. The design of the blood of the sin-offering was *εξιλασασθαι*, *to make reconciliation or atonement* for the people ; *καθαρισαι*, *to cleanse* them, that they might be *clean from all their sins* before the Lord, Lev. xvi. 27, 30. So Christ is said *ιλασκεσθαι*, *to make reconciliation or atonement* for the sins of the people, Heb. ii. 17. and his blood *καθαριζει*, *cleanseth* us from all sin, 1 John i. 7. The phrase *to bear sin* or *iniquity*, when used in a sacrificial sense, imports both to sustain the

proper sacrifice, but as the truth and substance of all the sacrifices of the law, and the only true and effectual atonement for sin, Heb. ix. chap. x. 1—19. The Hebrew word COPHER, which we render *atonement*, is by the Seventy translated *ιλασμος*, *propitiation*; and *to make an atonement* they express by the word *εξιλασχομαι*, which signifies *to render propitious*: and as the Greek term *ιλασμος* is applied to Christ, 1 John ii. 2. chap. iv. 10. and gives the true signification of the original word when applied to an atoning sacrifice, we must either admit that the sacrifice of Christ was a true and proper atonement or propitiation for sin, or deny

transferred guilt of sin, and to suffer the *punishment* due to it as the substitute of sinners. The first of these was strikingly exhibited in the ceremony of the scape-goat: the priest laid both his hands upon the head of the goat, and confessed over it all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the children of Israel, putting them upon its head, and then sending it away: and so it is said the goat, *ληψεται, shall bear upon him, or take away upon him*, all their iniquities, into a land not inhabited, Lev. xvi. 21, 22. The other idea, viz. suffering the punishment of sin, that was represented by killing the goat of the sin-offering, whose blood was brought within the vail to make the atonement, ver. 15. for the design of the sin-offerings was to *bear* the iniquities of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord, Lev. x. 15. Answerable to both these views, the prophet says of Christ, “The Lord *laid on him* the iniquities of us all,” Isa. liii. 6 “He hath *borne* our griefs,” Gr. sins, ver. 4. “He *bare* the sins of many,” ver. 12. “He shall *bear* their iniquities,” ver. 11. “He was *cut off* out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death,” ver. 8. This also is the language of the New Testament. John the Baptist points out Christ as the Lamb of God that *αιρων taketh away, or beareth away* the sin of the world, John i. 29. Paul says, “Christ was once offered, *ανεγκειν, to bear* the sins of many,” Heb. ix. 28. and Peter, using the same expression, shows where and how he bore sin, “Who his own self, *ανεγκεν, bare* our sins in his own body on the tree,” 1 Pet. ii. 24. and that “Christ once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust—being put to death in the flesh,” &c. chap. iii. 18. And by this sacrifice of himself he hath, *αθετησιν, put away* sin, or effected a *disannulling* of its guilt.

all that the scripture says as to the *design* and *effect* of sacrifices.

The death of Christ is not only held forth as a sacrifice for sin, but also as a *ransom price* paid for the redemption of sinners. This is the view he gives of it himself: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life, *λυτρον αντι πολλων*, a ransom for many," Matt. xx. 28. Mark x. 45. and Paul says, "Who gave himself *αντιλυτρον*, a ransom for all," 1 Tim. ii. 6. Sinners are by nature under a sentence of death and condemnation, and liable to everlasting misery on account of their sin and rebellion against God; to redeem them from the punishment they deserved, and procure for them pardon and reconciliation to God, Christ gave his own life as a ransom for them, by dying in their stead. And so they are termed a *purchased possession*, Eph. i. 14. a *purchased people*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. and are said to be *redeemed* or *ransomed*, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Thus they are redeemed to God by his blood, Rev. v. 9. and are not their own, but bought with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

Again, sin is represented as *uncleanness*, *filthiness*, and *pollution* in a moral sense; Job xv. 14—16. Isa. lxiv. 6. and as rendering sinners loathsome and abominable in the sight of a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, Hab. i. 13. Under the law, various purifications were appointed, not only to cleanse the people from their sins and ceremonial pollutions, but also the place of their worship, with its utensils, which were patterns of things in the heavens, such as the altar, the tabernacle;

and all the vessels of the ministry, which were defiled by their sins, Exod. xxix. 36, 37. Lev. xvi. 16—21. Heb. ix. 21. and the apostle says, that “almost all things are according to the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission,” Heb. ix. 22. Now this purifying or cleansing of persons and things by the application of sacrificial blood, is termed *reconciling* them, that both their persons and services might be accepted of God. Answerable to this, believers are said to be washed from their sins in the blood of Christ, which cleanseth them from all sin, Rev. i. 5. 1 John i. 7. and which, by purifying the heavenly things themselves, hath consecrated for them a new and living way of access into the holiest of all, Heb. ix. 23. chap. x. 19, 20. If the legal purifications answered the end of their appointment, and “sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God,” Heb. ix. 13, 14. The death of Christ hath reconciled men to God while they were yet sinners and enemies, Rom. v. 8—10. They receive this reconciliation when they believe and are justified, ver. 11. chap. iii. 24—26. and, through his sacrifice and mediation, they have continued pardon, supporting grace, and access to God, with acceptance in his worship, 1 John i. 7—9. chap. ii. 1, 2. Heb. iv. 16. chap. x. 22. Eph. ii. 18.

Whether, therefore, we view Christ in his death as a *sacrifice* to make an atonement for sin, or his blood as a *ransom price* paid for the guilty to redeem them from the penal sentence of the law, or as that which *cleanseth* them from the guilt of sin—these are but different points of view which centre in the same thing, and the effect

produced is the same, viz. the expiation of sin, and reconciliation to God.

Further, the Lord's *acceptance* of the typical sacrifices is expressed by his smelling, *οσμην ευωδιας*, *an odour of a sweet savour*, Lev. i. 9, 13, 17. or as the Hebrew has it, *a savour of rest**. When Noah built an altar and offered burnt-offerings to the Lord, it is said, "the Lord *smelled a sweet savour*, or *a savour of rest*, and said in his heart, I will not again smite any more every thing living, as I have done," Gen. viii. 21. Noah, by faith in the divine warning, had prepared an ark to the saving of his house from the deluge, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith, Heb. xi. 7. This deliverance prefigured salvation by Christ's death and resurrection, 1 Pet. iii. 18—22. His burnt-offerings typified the sacrifice of Christ, Heb. x. 8—11. and the Lord's acceptance of them is expressed by his *smelling a sweet savour*†; and was further signified to Noah by his gracious promise, that he would not again destroy the world with water, Gen. viii. 21. chap. ix. 11. Now this evidently prefigured his acceptance of the sacrifice of his beloved Son, and his full complacency and satisfaction in it; for, after a clear prediction of that divine sacrifice, and of the Lord's acceptance of it in Isa. liii. the succeeding chapter abounds with the most gracious promises to the gospel church; and, to set forth the stability of the covenant of his peace which was to be

* The Chaldee explains this expression of "receiving a thing with favourable acceptance." See Ainsworth on Lev. 1.

† The Hebrew word for *burnt-offerings* is *ENOLOTH*, which signifies *ascensions*, because they ascended up in fire and smoke, by which their savour went up towards heaven; and so the Lord's acceptance of them is expressed by his *smelling a savour of rest* in them; but which our translators from the LXX render his *smelling a sweet savour*.

established in Christ's blood, the Lord compares it to the irrevocable covenant which he made with Noah: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth: so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee," chap. liv. 9, 10. Burnt-offerings were also appointed by the law, and are described as "offerings made by fire (*εις οσμην ευωδιας*) FOR A SWEET SAVOUR UNTO THE LORD." Lev. i. 13, 17. and they were accepted for the people to make an atonement for them, ver. 4. Now the apostle states the sacrifice of Christ as the antitype of the burnt-offerings where he says, that he (*παρεδωκεν εαυτον*) hath delivered up himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God (*εις οσμην ευωδιας*) FOR A SWEET SMELLING SAVOUR." Eph. v. 2.

But though God accepted of the typical sacrifices, as answering the temporary ends of their appointment; yet he had no pleasure in them as an adequate satisfaction or proper atonement for sin; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin, Heb. x. 4. Christ is represented as enumerating all the sacrifices which were offered according to the law, such as sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, and declaring that God had no pleasure in them. They could not satisfy the demands of divine justice upon the guilty. This was reserved for the sacrifice of Christ, who by one offering of himself perfected for ever them that are sanctified. See Heb. x. 5—15. And it is on account of his sacrifice, that the promise of the new covenant is fulfilled, "Their sins

and iniquities will I remember no more," ver. 17. In the sacrifice of his beloved Son, God hath smelled a savour of eternal rest, as the honour of his moral government is hereby secured, the demands of law and justice fully answered, and his plan of mercy through a mediator firmly established on a foundation that provides for the glory of all his perfections, so that he can be just in justifying the ungodly believing in Jesus. His anger is turned away, Isa. xii. 1. Hos. xiv. 4. He is pacified towards his people for all that they have done, Ezek. xvi. 63. and he remembers their sins and iniquities no more to punish them in his wrath, Heb. viii. 12. Thus "God was by Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.—For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

PART II.

We shall now proceed to notice some of the chief objections against the doctrine of reconciliation.

Obj. 1. Socinians affirm, that it is contrary to reason and every idea of moral justice, that an innocent and righteous person should be substituted in the place of sinners, and suffer the punishment due to their sins, even though it should be with his own consent.

Ans. To transfer guilt to a substitute, and to punish the innocent for the guilty, are both positive and inseparable acts of the Supreme Lawgiver, and belong not to human judges. Though human reason could never have found out such an expedient for the salvation of sinners, yet, now that it is revealed, and the glorious design

of it unfolded, it is so far from being contrary to reason, that it must approve itself to every sober and enlightened mind as the contrivance of infinite wisdom ; for Christ crucified is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 24.

As to the *justice* of this wonderful expedient : if it were unjust in God to impute sin to the innocent who knew no sin, must it not be equally unjust in him not to impute sin to the guilty, Rom. iv. 7, 8. and to justify the ungodly ? ver. 5. and how then could sinners be saved at all consistently with justice ? To have cleared the guilty, and passed over sin with impunity, became not the holiness and justice of the righteous Judge of all the earth, or the honour of his law. In saving sinners, therefore, it was necessary that he should declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just in justifying ; and this he has done, by setting forth his own Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 25. So that what the Socinians consider as irrational and unjust, gives the clearest demonstration of the wisdom, holiness, and justice of God, and shews him at once to be the just God and the Saviour.

This doctrine might be illustrated by various transactions that take place among mankind. The scriptures represent sins as *debts*, Matt. vi. 12. Now if a man becomes surety for an insolvent debtor, he is bound to pay his debts though he never contracted them, and the creditor may justly look upon the surety as his debtor, and demand payment of him. Again, if a man is condemned to slavery or death, another, from a principle of friendship or humanity, may pay a ransom for his liberty or life ; so Christ gave his life a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 28. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Further, it has been an

universal opinion among mankind in all ages and nations, whatever way they came by it, that the Deity was to be appeased by sacrificing innocent victims in place of the guilty : and the whole sacrifice of the law of Moses, so expressly appointed by God himself, is founded on this principle, and, as has already been shown, was a prefiguration of the sacrifice of Christ, who hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Though Socinians deny that Christ died as the substitute of sinners, or to make atonement for their sins ; yet they admit that he died for the benefit and advantage of mankind ; and when we ask what benefit or advantage accrues to mankind from his death, we are told, that he died as a *martyr* to convince men of the truth of his doctrine, and as a *pattern* of the most perfect and inflexible virtue, under the greatest trials, to induce men to reform their lives and to follow his example.

It is fully admitted, that Christ's death, as connected with his resurrection, is a decisive proof of the truth of his doctrine, John ii. 18—23. and that, in his suffering for us, he has left us an example of patient suffering for righteousness sake, and of bearing the cross after him, 1 Pet. ii. 21. But these things are not the main or leading design of his death ; Stephen and James, and, we have reason to believe, Peter and Paul, died as martyrs, for the truth which they taught ; and the faith, patience and fortitude of such suffering confessors are also set before us for our imitation, Phil. iii. 17. Heb. vi. 12. chap. xiii. 7. But it would be the most absurd blasphemy to ascribe to their death what the scriptures ascribe to the death of Christ, such as that they gave their lives a ransom for many, died for our sins according to the scriptures, made reconciliation for the sins of the people, are the propitiation for our sins, and

that in them we have redemption through their blood, the forgiveness of sins.

As they deny the divinity and atonement of Christ, all they can ascribe to him is some degree of eminence above other prophets, martyrs, and virtuous examples, but no essential difference as to the nature, ends and effects of his mission. Now, if Christ, at the closing scene of his spotless life, suffered no more than other martyrs do, how will they account for the dreadful conflict of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane, while as yet no human hand was afflicting him? There he began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and said to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." In this distress he went and fell prostrate on his face and prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." And while offering up these prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And what shall we think of his loud cry upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If there were no bitter ingredients in his sufferings peculiar to himself, how shall we account for the awful amazement, deadly sorrow, and agony of his soul, and for his astonishing complaint that his God had forsaken him? Shall we attribute this to an excessive natural timidity, a fear of death, and of him that can only kill the body; or to the failure of his faith, fortitude and firmness of mind in the hour of trial? This would be to blaspheme the glorious Sufferer, and to sink his example in suffering far below that of many of his followers, who, supported by his grace, have endured the most excruciating tortures

that cruelty could invent, and with cheerfulness and resolution have laid down their lives rather than deny his name or renounce his cause. There must, therefore, have been something very extraordinary in the sufferings of Christ which so affected his soul; and what could that be but the withdrawing of the light of his Father's countenance from him, and making him to feel the power of that wrath which was due to the sins of those whom he personated? Thus it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief; to make his soul an offering for the sins of the guilty, and to inflict upon him that curse which they had incurred. This, and nothing else, can account for that inconceivably dreadful conflict which the Son of God endured in his soul.

But the Socinians are obstinate in their rejection of the atonement. Some of them admit that there are some expressions in the scriptures that seem to favour that idea, and that perhaps, it might be the opinion of the apostles that Christ's death made an atonement for sin; but do not think that they are under any obligation to believe it on that account: nay, Socinus himself avows, that though it were recorded in scripture in the clearest words, that Christ bore the punishment of our sins, he would not believe it. It is not, therefore, the want of scripture evidence that makes the Socinians deny the atonement, but the want of faith in the scriptures themselves. They have the concurring testimony of Moses, of the prophets, of Christ and his apostles to this grand article of the Christian faith; and if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

There are others who do not expressly deny the doctrine of the atonement, but yet have many objections against the scripture view of that subject, and the recon-

ciliation which is the immediate effect of it. We shall, therefore, endeavour to solve some of their objections or difficulties.

Obj. 1. We no where read in scripture of God's being *reconciled to us* by Christ's death, but of our being *reconciled to God*. See Rom. v. 10. chap. xi. 15. 2 Cor. v. 18. Eph. ii. 16. Col. i. 20. which cannot signify his being pacified towards us, but the removing of our disaffection, and reconciling of our hearts to him.

Ans. 1. This objection arises from inattention to, or ignorance of the import of scripture language. In common speech, indeed, we usually say, that the offended or injured party is reconciled; and by this we mean a change of his mind in favour of the offender, such as his being *satisfied* or *pacified* towards him: but in the scripture language, *to reconcile* most frequently signifies something *done* by, or on behalf of the offender, to make his peace, and to obtain favourable acceptance with the offended party; and so *to be reconciled* is to be restored to the favour and friendship of the party who was offended. In this sense it would be improper to say that the offended party is reconciled to the offender; because he needs no pardon from him, having never given him any just cause of offence.

That the scripture mentions the offender as the party to be reconciled, is clear from a number of passages. Thus the princes of the Philistines say of David, "Wherewith should he RECONCILE HIMSELF to his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?" 1 Sam. xxix. 4. Observe here, that Saul is considered as the offended party, and David as the offender; yet it is not said that David should *reconcile his master to him*, but that he should *reconcile himself to his master*; i. e. make his peace with him, or make himself acceptable

to him ; and the means he was to use for this purpose was, to present him with the heads of his enemies as a kind of satisfaction or atonement. Again, Matt. v. 23, 24. “ If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first BE RECONCILED to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Here the person offering the gift is the offender, for he is supposed to remember something which his brother has against him ; yet he is not commanded to go and *reconcile his brother to him*, but to *reconcile himself to his brother* : the import of which command is, make satisfaction to thy brother for thy offence, and obtain his forgiveness. Another text to this purpose is in 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11. “ Let not the wife depart from her husband ; but, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or BE RECONCILED to her husband.” The wife here is the transgressing party in departing from her husband ; yet she is not enjoined to *reconcile her husband to her*, but to *reconcile herself to her husband* : i. e. Let her return to her duty, and make her peace with her husband. These passages clearly shew, that, according to the style of the scriptures, it is the guilty person that is reconciled ; but then it is by pacifying or making satisfaction to the party offended. In like manner, when God is said to reconcile the world to himself by Christ, 2 Cor. v. 19. it imports, that when the world could do nothing to satisfy or pacify him for their sins, he substituted his own Son in their place as a sin-offering, took satisfaction from him on their account ; and thus reconciled or made them acceptable to himself, and so does not impute their trespasses unto them. In this sense it must also be understood in Rom. v. 10. Eph. ii. 16. Col. i. 20. Now this includes the very

idea we have when in common language we say, *God is reconciled to us*; for our being *reconciled to him* by a sacrifice procuring our peace with him, or the forgiveness of our sins, and his being *reconciled to us*, are relative and inseparable ideas; and what oan the *turning away of his anger*, Hos. xiv. 4. and his remembering our sins and iniquities no more, mean, but his being reconciled toward us? But I must observe further, that God's being reconciled to his people is a scripture expression, and used by himself, Ezek. xvi. 63. "When I am PACIFIED towards thee for all that thou hast done." Observe here, that the Hebrew word Copher rendered *pacified*, is the very same that is elsewhere translated *reconcile* or *atone*, as in Lev. viii. 15. chap. xvi. 20. 2 Chron. xxix. 24. and when applied unto God, signifies his being pacified, propitiated, reconciled, or placated by sacrifice*.

2. God's reconciling the world to himself cannot mean reconciling our hearts to him, though that is a consequence of it: 1. Because the apostle declares this reconciliation to be a thing already accomplished. He does not say *God is in Christ*, but *God (γν) was by Christ* reconciling the world to himself, which refers to the time when he made him sin for us; but this was before the world came to the knowledge of the truth, and long before many of them were born, and so could not have their hearts then reconciled unto God. 2. He uses this reconciliation as an argument to reconcile our hearts unto God, and, therefore, it cannot be the same, but is as distinct as cause and effect. 3. This reconciliation is the subject of the gospel testimony which the

* In the Apocrypha the reconciliation of God to men is frequently mentioned. See 2 Maccabees i. 5. chap. v. 20. chap. vii. 33. chap. viii. 29.

apostles had in commission to proclaim to the world, "He hath," says the apostle, "committed to us the ministry of reconciliation," and what is that? "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." But it was no part of the gospel testimony, that the hearts of the world were reconciled to God. That was matter of *exhortation*, not of *testimony*.

Obj. 2. God is perfect love and goodness in his very nature, 1 John iv. 8, 10. and, therefore, there can be no wrath or hatred in him towards any of his creatures, consequently no occasion for any satisfaction being made to him for their sins.

Ans. God, indeed, in his very nature is perfect love and goodness, and cannot hate any of his creatures *as such*: but this is perfectly consistent with his being also infinitely *holy*, which is the glory and beauty of his whole character, and without which he would not appear lovely to a sanctified heart. Hence he must necessarily love holiness, and hate sin and moral depravity in his rational creatures. The scriptures every where abound with declarations to this purpose, and his holy, just, and good law demonstrates the same truth. His loving what is morally excellent, and his hating sin, which is intrinsically evil, are the necessary effects not only of his holiness, but goodness; for sin in its nature is not only opposite to the holiness but happiness of his creatures. He is also infinitely *just*, as the moral Governor and Judge of the world, and hath declared that he will by no means clear the guilty. Were he to pass over sin with impunity, and suffer his authority to be disregarded and trampled upon; were he never to punish the transgressors of his holy law, either in their own persons, or in the person of a voluntary substitute, how could the wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of his

administration appear? But God hath sufficiently manifested himself as the hater and punisher of sin: "He spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment," 2 Pet. ii. 4. His wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, Rom. i. 18. and he hath declared, that he will at last adjudge the wicked to the punishment of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41, 46. These scripture facts and declarations cannot be explained away; and shall we say they are inconsistent with the love and goodness of the Divine Being, or that "God is unrighteous who taketh vengeance? Far be it; for then how shall God judge the world?" Rom. iii. 5, 6.

When the apostle John affirms that "God is love," 1 John iv. 8. he does not mean that God's love is manifested towards sinners without any regard to the satisfaction of his justice in the punishment of their sins, or that he forgives their sins without the intervention of an atoning sacrifice; for in the verses immediately following he plainly declares the contrary: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be (*ἱλασμον* *περι* *των* *αμαρτιων* *ημων*) THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS," ver. 9, 10. To affirm with the Socinians, "that an atonement was unnecessary as a medium of reconciliation, because God has a right to dispense pardon without the intervention of any such medium," is to throw a foul reflection on the character and conduct of the Most High. To admit that God sent his only begotten Son into the world to die for our

sins according to the scriptures—to be the propitiation for our sins—to reconcile us unto God by his death, and that we might have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins ; and yet to maintain, at the same time, that an atonement was quite unnecessary as a medium of reconciliation and pardon, is to impeach the divine wisdom, justice, and goodness in the highest degree ; for where is the wisdom of appointing what is unnecessary ? And how does it consist either with justice or goodness to make his own beloved Son undergo such dreadful sufferings, both in soul and body, without any necessity, and when the end might have been answered equally well without any such thing ?

But it is said that God has a *right* to dispense pardon without an atonement. But when did he ever reveal or exercise this supposed right ? Not under the Old Testament ; for without shedding of blood, there was then no remission even in a typical sense, Heb. ix. 22. and as to real remission, the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament was by means of Christ's death, ver. 15. Not under the New Testament ; for the gospel reveals no way of reconciliation to God, no remission of sins, but “ through the death of his Son,” Rom. v. 10. “ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins,” chap. iii. 24, 25. God has a *right* to do many things which he will not do ; there are other things which it would not be fit or becoming in him to do, and there are things which he cannot possibly do, because they are absolutely inconsistent with the moral rectitude of his nature and perfections ; thus it is said, “ he cannot deny himself ;—it is impossible for God to lie,” 2 Tim. ii. 13. Heb. vi. 18. We must not, therefore, attribute

to him a *right* to do any thing but what is right in itself, or at least right upon the whole, and befitting his character and righteous government. In saving sinners, he certainly was best judge in what method that was to be done, so as most effectually to answer all the ends he had in view: now we are told, that the method in which "it BECAME him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," to accomplish this was, "to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 9, 10. And will ignorant mortals presume to say, that the sufferings of the Son of God were unnecessary as a medium of reconciliation? This sentiment is intimately connected with another equally detestable: Socinus says, "I contend, that the origin of men's damnation is derived, not from any *divine justice*, but from the *free will of God*." In other words, The cause of men's endless perdition is not the criminal desert of sin, but the sovereign will and pleasure of God! This shocking assertion contradicts the whole current of revelation, which assigns sin as the cause of punishment, and it gives the lie to the solemn oath of Jehovah, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have NO PLEASURE in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." As all mankind are sinners and deserve punishment, so God manifests his sovereignty in shewing mercy to some in distinction from others; yet he neither actually pardons nor punishes in an arbitrary manner. He pardons none but through the atonement, whereby he declares his righteousness for the remission of sins, and he inflicts punishment on none but those who for their sins justly deserve it.

Obj. 3. It is objected, that when God either promises or bestows, not only temporal but spiritual blessings

upon sinners, he frequently represents them as proceeding from his own sovereign will and pleasure, without the least mention of the mediation or atonement of Christ as the medium through which he confers them ; so that such a medium does not appear so absolutely necessary as some represent it.

Ans. 1. The atonement and mediation of Christ are not the *cause* of God's love to sinners, but the *effects* of it : " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. It was by sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and that we might live through him, that God commendeth and manifesteth his love towards us, Rom. v. 8. 1 John iv. 9, 10. The whole plan of redemption originated in God's everlasting love, and all the blessings of it take their rise from his sovereign will and pleasure. But then,

2. The atonement or vicarious death of Christ was laid in the very foundation of the plan of redemption, as the *method* in which it was to be effected, and the *medium* through which all its blessings were to be conferred, in a consistency with the character and government of a holy and just God. Thus in God's eternal plan, which originated in the sovereign good pleasure of his will, or according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, he chose and predestinated his people ; but it was *in* or *through* Christ, Eph. i. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11. 2 Tim. i. 9. and all the spiritual blessings which he actually confers upon them in time and through eternity, flow to them in the same channel, Eph. i. 3, 7. chap. ii. 4—11. Therefore, when God promises or actually bestows spiritual blessings on sinners, and represents them as proceeding from his own sovereign

will and pleasure, this is not opposed to the atonement and mediation of Christ, but to any moral fitness or personal worthiness in the objects of his favour. Thus the Lord says to Israel, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, FOR MINE OWN SAKE, and will not remember thy sins," Isa. xliii. 25. and by the prophet Ezekiel, having made large promises to them, he says, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen whither you went. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel," Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32. Here we see that the Lord promises to bestow forgiveness of sins and other blessings for his own name's sake, as opposed to his doing it for their sakes; and though an atonement is not expressly mentioned, in some passages, as the medium through which promised blessings were to be bestowed, yet it is always implied; for it is clearly revealed, that without shedding of blood there was no remission under the law; that the legal atoning sacrifices were types of the sacrifice of Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; that Christ died for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, as well as for those committed under the new; that he is the propitiation not only for the sins of the Jews, but for the sins of the whole world; that it is *in him* that God hath blessed his people, not only with remission of sins, but with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things, and that it is *in him* that all the promises of God are yea, and *in him* amen, unto the glory of God.

It is plain, therefore, that the atonement of Christ was laid in the very foundation of the scheme of redemption, and that it is not only the great medium *through which*, but the meritorious cause *for which* all spiritual blessings are bestowed in a consistency with the divine character and moral government.

Obj. 4. God loved his people whom he foreknew, and chose them to everlasting life before the foundation of the world; but how does this love consist with his wrath being kindled against them to such a degree, that nothing but the exercise of vindictive justice in the punishment of their sins could pacify him? Does not this look rather like hatred than love?

Ans. 1. God has sufficiently declared his hatred of sin, revealed his wrath from heaven against it, and in his law denounced a curse upon every one that commits it. But when we think of hatred or wrath in God, we are not to conceive of it as of the same nature with what takes place in the breasts of sinful mortals, when influenced by enmity or malevolence against the persons of those who offend them, and so thirst for private revenge, and are gratified with their destruction. God does not in this sense hate even the most wicked: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live," Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Sin is the immediate object of God's hatred, which arises from the necessary opposition and repugnancy of his essential holiness to moral evil; and as he is also the supreme Ruler, Law-giver, and Judge of the world, the exercise of vindictive justice in the punishment of sin is essential to his character and government; for if God were unrighteous in taking vengeance, how could he judge the world? Rom. iii. 5, 6. How could he vindicate the rights of

his throne, or maintain law and order among his subjects, if disobedience and rebellion were to pass with impunity?

2. With regard to the elect whom God in his sovereign purpose chose to eternal life, they, as well as others, have sinned and come short of the glory of God : their sins are as displeasing and hateful to God as the sins of others, and equally deserve to be punished : they are condemned by the law ; and are by nature the children of wrath even as others, Eph. ii. 3. Yet all this is consistent with God's love to them. The displeasure of men is indeed apt to degenerate into hatred or revenge, and so to swallow up their pity and compassion to an offender ; or, on the other hand, their compassion towards the criminal may lessen their displeasure at his crime, and dispose them to connive at it, and to dispense with the just punishment due to it. Again, a just and good judge may wish to extend mercy to a criminal, but cannot do it consistently with law and justice : but none of these cases are applicable to God ; he can manifest his utmost hatred and indignation against sin in a consistency with his love and mercy to sinners, and commend his love towards them in the very exercise of his justice in punishing their sins : and this he hath actually done by substituting his own Son in their place, and punishing him in their stead. The consistency of God's wrath against sin, with his love of good-will to sinners, may be illustrated by the case of Job's three friends, Job xlii. 7, 8. "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends, for they have not spoken of me the thing that is right." Here God declares his wrath against them for their sin, even as he does against a guilty world ; yet we find him at the same time expressing his love of good-

will towards them by directing them to the means of reconciliation by a sacrifice of atonement, and the intercession of Job on their behalf: "Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks, and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly."

Obj. 5. But if God was angry and is now pleased and reconciled through the atonement of Christ, does not this imply a change of mind in God? Yet the scriptures inform us, that "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" Job xxiii. 13. that with him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Jam. i. 17. And he himself declares, "I am the Lord, I change not." Mal. iii. 6.

Ans. The scriptures frequently attribute to God repentance or a change of mind; but this is spoken after the manner of men, and does not signify any alteration in himself, or in his counsels or purposes, but only in his dispensations, conduct or dealings towards men. The satisfaction or atonement of Christ produced no change in the divine perfections, but opened a way for the consistent exercise of them in the salvation of sinners. It demonstrated the immutability of his holiness and hatred of sin; his unalterable truth in his threatenings against it; his inflexible justice in not dispensing with its punishment, though his own Son should be made the victim; and his unchangeable love to his elect, which, instead of being extinguished by their sins, was manifested towards them to such an amazing degree, as to give his Son to die for them. Nor did the atonement made by Christ produce any change in the divine counsels or purposes; for it was laid in the foundation of his eternal plan of mercy. Christ was fore-ordained to

make reconciliation for iniquity before the foundation of the world: he was promised and typified in that view under the Old Testament; was sent and came into the world for that very purpose; and he was delivered up to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God: in all this God was in one mind and changed not. But as to the situation of sinners in relation to God, the atonement has produced the greatest change imaginable. It has satisfied the demands of law and justice upon them for their sins; procured their deliverance from the curse of the law; is the meritorious ground of their pardon, peace, and acceptance with God; and it gives a most glorious and consistent display of the divine character, as it not only manifests the amazing love and grace of God towards sinners, but demonstrates his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Rom. v. 8. chap. iii. 25, 26.

Obj. 6. The scripture no where declares that the design of Christ's death was to make satisfaction to divine justice, and therefore we have no ground to believe any such thing.

Ans. 1. Were the idea of Christ's making satisfaction by his death an unscriptural idea, the objection would be just; but if the scripture conveys that idea by a variety of equivalent expressions, then the objection is either a mere cavil at words, or it arises from a disbelief of the true doctrine of the atonement. When full reparation is made for any damage or injury, we say, satisfaction is made; or when a criminal suffers the penalty of the law, we say the law is satisfied, or justice is satisfied. Now Christ is constantly represented as having died for our sins, suffered for us the just for the unjust, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; as having given his

life a ransom for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. What sense can we find in such expressions if we exclude the idea of his suffering the penalty of the law which we had incurred by our sins, and so having by his death made satisfaction to offended justice on our account? Nothing can be more futile or trifling than to object to the idea of *satisfaction*, merely because that particular English word is not used on this subject in our translation, though there are other words used which fully bear that sense. Suppose a person, who has some knowledge of the original, should deny the atonement of Christ, merely because the English word *atonement* is not to be found in all the New Testament, except in Rom. v. 11. and that there the original word καταλλαγή does not signify atonement but *reconciliation*; would not this be to deceive the English reader, and to act a dishonest part, since he must know that there is another word *viz.* ἱλασμός, which is translated *propitiation*, and properly signifies *atonement*, 1 John ii. 2. chap. iv. 10. for these two English words signify the same thing, and are convertible terms. Now what is an atonement or propitiation for sin, but that which makes satisfaction for it, which pacifies the offended party, and effects a reconciliation? It may also be observed, that the Hebrew word COPHER, which by the Seventy is translated ἱλασμός, and by us *an atonement*, imports *satisfaction* for sin, and is so rendered in Numb. xxxv. 31, 32.

Obj. 7. But Christ is God; and with what propriety can it be said, that God made satisfaction to himself?

Ans. 1. Christ is indeed truly God, yet he is personally distinguished from the Father, not only before he came into the world, but before the world was, John i. 1. chap. xvii. 5. for he was before all things, and by

him were all things made, Col. i. 16, 17. John i. 3. 2. Christ is not only a distinct person from the Father in the divine nature, but, in the prosecution of the plan of redemption, he in the fulness of the time assumed human nature, and became a real man, and so is the Word made flesh, John i. 14. God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Emmanuel, God with us, Matt. i. 23. In this constitution of his person he is the only begotten Son of God the Father; and by thus taking part of the same flesh and blood with the children whom God had given him, (Heb. ii. 13—17) he became capable of representing them. 3. This divine person incarnate was actually constituted by his Father the representative of the elect, and vested with the office of mediator between God and them; “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Tim. ii. 5, In this character he sustains the offices of prophet, priest, and king, Acts iii. 22. Heb. ii. 17. Ps. ii. 6. and is called the Christ, as being anointed and consecrated to these offices.

Thus an economy or order of administration is established, in which the Father and Son sustain different characters, and act distinct and peculiar parts in the work of man’s redemption. The Father sustains the majesty and vindicates the honour and rights of Deity; agreeably to this, he sends his Son into the world as his commissioned servant, and gives him commandment as to the work he was to finish. The Son, on the other hand, agreeably to his character and office, comes to do his Father’s will who sent him, takes the cause of his guilty people upon himself, becomes responsible for them, and satisfies the demands of law and justice upon them, by laying down his life as an atoning sacrifice for their sins. Thus the man Christ Jesus, under the cha-

rafter of Mediator, gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. These principles being admitted, (and admit them we must, or give up with revelation,) they afford a full answer to the objection. If his being God were an argument against his making satisfaction for sin, it would equally militate against his being a Mediator at all, as if it implied that he was a Mediator between himself and men.

Obj. 8. But men are said to be justified *freely* by God's *grace*, and to be saved *by grace*; how does this consist with Christ's making satisfaction to divine justice for their sins, or paying a price for their redemption,

Ans. 1. The scriptures, indeed, abundantly declare that sinners are justified and saved by the *free grace* of God, as opposed to all their own *works* or *merits*. Justification is to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. They are saved *by grace* through faith—not of *works*, lest any man should boast, Eph. ii. 8, 9. Works and grace are opposed in this matter as being inconsistent. “If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” Rom. xi. 6. But then it must be noticed, that, in all such passages, it is *their own works* that are excluded and opposed to grace, and not *the work of Christ*, nor the satisfaction made by his death.

2. The satisfaction which Christ hath made for sin by his death is so far from being inconsistent with the freedom of divine grace, that the scripture always represents it both as the *effect* of divine grace, and as the *channel* or *medium* through which it is exercised towards guilty sinners. 1. It is represented as the most wonderful *effect* of divine love and grace. God so LOVED

the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." John iii. 16. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Rom. viii. 32. "God COMMEND-ETH HIS LOVE towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." chap. v. 8. "Herein is LOVE, not that we loved God, but that he LOVED US, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 10. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels—that he, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, should taste death for every man." Heb. ii. 9.

2. It is represented as the *channel* or *medium* through which the free grace of God is exercised towards guilty sinners, in their justification and salvation. When the apostle says, that sinners are "justified FREELY BY GOD'S GRACE," he adds, "THROUGH THE REDEMPTION that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. iii. 24. In whom we have redemption THROUGH HIS BLOOD, the forgiveness of sins, according to the RICHES OF HIS GRACE." Eph. i. 7. Here we see that justification or forgiveness of sins is bestowed *freely by God's grace*, or according to the *riches of his grace*; yet it is only (*δία*) *through the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus, or *through his blood*, as the (*τιμή*) price of that redemption. See also 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The free and abundant grace by which the guilty are saved, is that grace which reigns *through righteousness*, through the righteousness or obedience of one, whereby many are made righteous, Rom. v. 18, 19, 21. "For God hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. There is, therefore, no revelation of the free and true grace of God towards the guilty but through the atonement; and it is through this also that God declares his righteousness in the remission of sins; that he might be

just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Rom. iii. 25, 26. Salvation is entirely of free grace in respect of our deserts, or of any thing we have done or can do to procure it; but it is not so in respect of our Representative and Substitute; for he fully paid the price of redemption for the elect, satisfied all the claims of law and justice upon them, and procured all spiritual blessings for them*. Therefore, to set the freeness of

* Mr. Fuller, speaking of the ends of Christ's death, opposes the sentiment, "That Christ has *purchased* repentance and faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings on behalf of the elect;" and denies that "God is bound in strict justice, in respect of Christ, to confer grace and glory on all those for whom he died." He acknowledges that "he never could perceive that any clear or determinate idea was conveyed by the term *purchase* in this connection, nor does it appear to him to be a doctrine taught in the scriptures. The notion of grace being bestowed *on account of value received* appears to him inconsistent with the freeness of grace itself, and with the perfection of the divine Being, to whom nothing can be added or given which can lay him under obligation. If the salvation of sinners had been a commercial transaction, he might possibly have been bound in strict right, with respect to Christ, to bestow grace and glory; but in that case there would have been no room for free remission with respect to the Father. If sin be not a *debt* but a *crime*; and if the satisfaction of Christ was not a reimbursement of lost property, but an expedient devised for the preserving of the divine character in the exercise of mercy, no such consequence will follow. God will be under no other obligation to save any sinner than that which spontaneously arises from his own nature, and the promise made to his Son. If we say *a way was opened by the death of Christ for the free and consistent exercise of mercy in all the methods which sovereign wisdom saw fit to adopt*, perhaps we shall include every material idea which the scriptures give us of that important event." See THE GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS. Part II. chap. iv. p. 260, 261. *note*. On this I observe,

1. That the word of God frequently represents sins as *debts*, and sinners as *debtors*; See Mat. vi. 20. chap. xviii. 27, 30, 32. chap. xxiii. 16, 18.— Luke vii. 4, 13, 41. Now if *sin is not a debt*, nor bears any resemblance or analogy to it, then the Holy Spirit has used not only an improper term, but one which tends to mislead and convey a wrong idea of the subject. But if it be allowed that love and obedience are a debt we owe to God by the law of our creation, it must also be admitted, that sin, which is not only a with-

divine grace in opposition to the satisfaction of Christ, or the redemption that is through his blood, is to set it in

holding what is justly due to God, but the positive transgression of his law and rebellion against his authority, must make us debtors to his justice, or in other words, lay us under an obligation to punishment according to the penalty of his law. Sin is indeed a *crime*, but it is not the less a *debt*, though not of a pecuniary but moral kind; and so satisfaction for it is not a *reimbursement of lost property* but suffering the penalty incurred by it. Men may have run the parallel too close in some particulars; but who is it that ever imagined that sin is a *pecuniary debt*, that satisfaction for it was a *reimbursement of lost property*, or that the salvation of sinners was a *commercial transaction*? Such expressions have too much of the air of burlesque.

2. It is certain that salvation is of grace, Eph. ii. 5, 8, and if it is inconsistent with the freeness of grace that Christ should have purchased faith and repentance for the elect, his purchasing any other spiritual blessing for them must be equally so; and so it must follow that no spiritual blessing is conferred on account of any thing Christ has done as the procuring or meritorious cause of it. If Christ has not procured faith, repentance and every other spiritual blessing for them, why is it said that it is given them *in the behalf of Christ* to believe on him? Phil. i. 29. or that they have obtained like precious faith with the apostles *through the righteousness* of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ? 2 Pet. i. 1. Is he not in consequence of his death exalted for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins? Acts v. 31.—Nay, are they not said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*? Eph. i. 3. If he has not merited and procured the benefits of redemption for his people, how are they said to be bestowed on them in him, in his name, for his sake, through his blood, through his righteousness or obedience? This manner of speaking which runs through the whole New Testament, clearly imports that Christ had procured these blessings for his people, and that they are conferred on them freely on his account, or in consideration of what he hath done for them. To represent Christ's death merely as a *medium* through which spiritual blessings are conveyed, and not the *meritorious procuring cause* of them, is to ascribe no more to it than to the preaching of the gospel, which is also a medium through which salvation is conveyed. It is needless to contend about the word *purchase*. It is certain that Christ hath purchased the elect, for they are bought with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 20., redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 19. and so are a purchased people, ch. ii. 9. the purchased possession, Eph. i. 14. but in purchasing their persons he also procured for them all spiritual blessings :—Yet all this is consistent with sove-

opposition to justice, to itself, and to the channel through which it flows freely to the guilty.

reign free grace, as opposed to any worth in them, or to works of righteousness which they have done : For instance, God justifies sinners *through the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus *through his blood* ; yet he does it *freely by his grace*. Rom. iii. 24. chap. v. 9.

3. It is said, "That God is under no other obligation to save any sinner than that which spontaneously arises from his own nature, and the promise made to his Son." It is freely admitted, that, abstract from the scheme of redemption, which originated in God's own sovereign will, and eternal purpose which he purposed in himself, he was under no obligation whatever to save any sinner. But, if I mistake not, the words just cited go to deny, that God has laid himself under any obligation, in consideration of the death of Christ, to save any of those for whom he died ; for the connection of the words with the foregoing reasoning requires this sense. True, an obligation is acknowledged to arise from his promise to his Son ; but we are not told what kind of promise that is. If it is an *absolute* promise, then it can have no respect to the death of Christ as a condition ; and if it is a *conditional* promise, suspended upon Christ's death, as a satisfaction for sin and price of redemption, then, according to the argument, it is "inconsistent with the *freeness* of grace, and with the *perfection* of the divine Being."

The amount of the whole seems to be this, That the death of Christ has not procured salvation for any ; but has only opened a way, in which God has a right, without any injury to his justice, to exercise mercy to whom, and in what method his sovereign wisdom sees fit : And this agrees with what he elsewhere advances, viz. "That the *PECULIARITY* of redemption consists in the sovereign pleasure of God, with regard to its *APPLICATION*." *Gospel worthy of all acceptation*, p. 108, 109. This is plainly Arminian doctrine. ARMINIUS himself says, "I affirm that redemption is *obtained* for the whole world ; for all and every man ; but *applied* to believers and the elect only." *Contra PERKINS*, p. 197. So also GREVINCHOVIUS, "God intended the impetration of redemption, by the death of his own Son, for all and every one.—After that redemption was obtained and finished, the right remained wholly in God *to apply* or *not to apply* it, as it should seem good unto him. Nor was the application of it properly the end of its impetration, but to get a right and power [unto God] to apply it according to his own most free determination, to whomsoever he would."—*Contra AMESIUM*, p. 7. 8, 9. This is to deny that the salvation of any is secured either by election or redemption ; or that there is an inseparable connection between redemption and its application ; between the death of Christ and the salvation of all for whom he died.

Obj. 9. It has been said, that it was to God that Christ paid the price by which the elect are redeemed, and the scripture says, that he hath redeemed them to God, Rev. v. 9, 10. But how do these things consist? Does it seem just that God should claim both the price and the people purchased?

Ans. There is a redemption by *power*, and a redemption by *price*.

1. There is a redemption by *power*. Such was the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage, which was effected, not by paying a price for their liberty to Pharaoh, but by delivering them with an outstretched arm and destroying him and his host. So Christ redeems his people from the power and tyranny of their spiritual enemies, not by paying a price to those enemies, but by overcoming and destroying them. Luke i. 71. Col. ii. 15. Heb. ii. 14, 15, But,

2. There is a redemption by *price*. That price is the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. which is exhibited in various points of view, answerable to the exigencies of man's fallen state in relation to God. The death of Christ, as the substitute of sinners, is represented as a *sacrifice* to make reconciliation for their sins, Rom. v. 10. Eph. v. 2. as the *punishment* due to their transgressions, Isa. liii. 4, 5. 1 Pet. ii. 24. chap. iii. 18.—and as a *ransom* or *price of redemption*, by which they are bought off and set free from the penal claims of justice and sentence of the law, Matt. xx. 28. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Gal. iii. 13. Rev. v. 9. But which ever of these views we take of the death of Christ, it is certain, that it was to God he offered his

I hope, however, that Mr. Fuller is not settled in this Arminian principle, nor would hold by its plain consequences: And I am the rather inclined to think so, as there are other parts of his writings perfectly inconsistent with it.

sacrifice, made satisfaction, and paid the ransom price of redemption for his people, and not to their enemies. Yet he has not bought them off from God, or freed them from the obligation of obedience to him, as when men redeem slaves from their masters. They are indeed freed from the penalty of the law, or the obligation to suffer, but not from the obligation to obey. They are redeemed from death under the curse of God, but not from allegiance to him. On the contrary, Christ, in giving his life a ransom to God for them, has redeemed or bought them to God; has brought them into a new relation to him, and laid them under additional obligations to love and obey him, Tit. ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 14—20. Thus we may see how it is just with God to claim both the ransom price and the people ransomed. His taking satisfaction for our sins from his own Son as our substitute, does not vacate his right to our persons and services, but, on the contrary, lays us under the strongest obligations both of duty and gratitude, to glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are his property, not only by creation, but as being redeemed or bought with a price, 1 Cor. vi. 20. It remains to consider,

IV. The end or design of the ministry of reconciliation.

The ministry of reconciliation is the work of preaching or publishing the glad news of that peace and reconciliation which is now effected by the atoning obedience of the Son of God for sinners of all nations. This ministry was committed to the apostles of our Lord in the commission which he gave them to preach the gospel to every creature, Mark xvi. 15. and so the apostle having said that the word of reconciliation was

committed to them, adds, "Therefore we are ambassadors (*υπερ*) for," or in the stead of, "Christ." Here we may notice, that Christ himself was the Father's immediate and chief ambassador of peace and good will to men. Hence he constantly speaks of himself as sent of the Father, as representing him, as vested with his authority, and as acting in his name, by speaking his words, and doing his works. When Christ had finished his personal ministry upon earth, and made peace by the blood of his cross, the apostles were commissioned to go into all the world and proclaim the good news of reconciliation through Christ. It was of great importance to know that the apostolic message was from God, that it was his word which they declared, and that they were fully authorised by him to do so; and, therefore, the apostle mentions it twice in the passage under consideration: "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," ver. 18. and again, he "hath committed to us the word of reconciliation," ver. 19. which imports that he furnished them both with the subject of their message and with a commission to declare it. They were not only eye and ear witnesses of the facts which they testified, 1 John i. 3. but were also guided by the infallible inspiration of the Spirit into all truth, 1 John xvi. 13, 14. 1 Cor. ii. 10. and endowed with supernatural gifts and miraculous powers for the confirmation of their doctrine and mission. Thus the apostles were qualified and commissioned to be ambassadors for Christ.

The ministry of reconciliation, as here briefly stated, contains in it, 1. A testimony, and 2. An earnest call and entreaty grounded on that testimony.

1. It contains a testimony or declaration, "to wit, That God was in (or by) Christ reconciling the world

to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," ver. 19. and that this was effected by his "making him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," ver. 21. This is the same with what the apostle Paul preached to the Corinthians first of all, and in believing which they were saved, 1 Cor. xv. 1—3. and this is the gospel or glad tidings which, "according to the commandment of the eternal God, they were to make known to all nations for the obedience of faith," Rom. xvi. 26. They were to proclaim to all men, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That he substituted him in the place of sinners, laid their iniquities upon him, and spared him not, but made him, the Just One who knew no sin, to suffer for the unjust, and bear the punishment and curse due to their sins in his own body on the tree: they were to publish to all the world that peace is now made through the blood of Christ's cross; that by the atoning obedience of the Son of God all the demands of law and justice are completely satisfied; that God is fully placated or well pleased, and requires no more offering for sin, as he hath clearly demonstrated by raising Jesus from the dead, and glorifying him at his own right hand. They were to declare that the work finished by the Son of God is the sole and exclusive ground upon which guilty sinners can obtain pardon and acceptance with God; that it is alone sufficient for that purpose, without the consideration of any qualifications, good works or worthiness of theirs, and that through Christ's name whoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins. All this answers to the message which the king sent by his servants to those who were bidden to the mar-

riage feast: "Behold I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready," Matt. xxii. 4.

2. The ministry of reconciliation also includes in it a commission to call all men every where to faith and repentance, and to entreat and beseech them to be reconciled to God. The apostle having said, that the word of reconciliation was committed to them, adds, "Therefore we are ambassadors (*υπερ*) for Christ, as though God (*παρακληντες*) were entreating* by us: (*δεομεθα*) We beseech in Christ's stead, *saying*, Be ye reconciled to God," ver. 20. What astonishing grace and condescension is here! How far does it transcend the manner of men! Does a creditor ever beseech his insolvent debtor to accept of a free and full acquittal? Or does a judge ever entreat a condemned criminal to accept of pardon? Yet God, who is the great Creator and supreme Sovereign and Judge, against whom his creatures have rebelled, not only vouchsafes to proclaim, that peace and reconciliation is already made through the death of his Son; but with the most earnest importunity, invites, solicits, and entreats guilty rebels to be reconciled to him. This answers to the invitation in the parable, "Come to the marriage," Matt. xxii. 4. and again, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled," Luke xiv. 23.

But though Christ by his death hath made atonement

* The original has not the pronoun *you*, in the two middle clauses of this verse. It may either be supplied by the word *men* from ver. 11. or by the nearest antecedent which is *the world*, ver. 19. For the apostle is not here directly addressing himself to the Corinthians, whom he supposed to be already reconciled, but is giving them an account of the tenor of his ministry to the world at large, and so the words wanting may be supplied thus. "As though God were entreating *the world* by us; we beseech them in Christ's stead, *saying*, Be ye reconciled to God."

unto God for the sins of all for whom he died, and hath merited and procured all spiritual blessings for them; yet the benefits of Christ's death are not actually applied to, or enjoyed by them, till the appointed time in which each of them respectively is brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth. Till then, they are in a state of nature, under the influence of Satan and dominion of sin, alienated from God, enemies to him in their minds by wicked works, and are by nature children of wrath even as others, Rom. vi. 17. Col. i. 21. Eph. ii. 1, 4. Now the great end or design of the ministry of reconciliation is to make known that peace which is already procured for sinners by the death of Christ, and by this means to remove the enmity and rebellion of the human heart, and bring the minds of sinners into a state of peace and reconciliation towards God. It was therefore necessary,

1. That sinners should be informed of this conciliating truth, namely, "That God was by Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." That he hath obtained full satisfaction for the sins of men by the atoning death of his beloved Son, and hath manifested himself to be the God of peace in his bringing him again from the dead and glorifying him. Whatever Christ hath done for the redemption of sinners, it can have no influence or effect upon the state of their minds till it is revealed or made known to them. Hence we may see the importance of the ministry of reconciliation, as without it men could know nothing of the way of salvation by Christ, nor be any way relieved or affected in their minds by it. Therefore to communicate this knowledge, Christ commissioned his apostles to go into all the world, and publish the glad news of peace and reconciliation to every creature.

2. The ministry of reconciliation is absolutely necessary to beget men to the faith of Christ. True indeed, many hear the word of reconciliation who do not believe it. Faith is the gift of God, is given in the behalf of Christ, and requires the influence of the Holy Spirit to produce it; but this influence is not exerted without the word, nor previous to men's hearing it, but concurs with the word to give it effect; for "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?—Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 14, 17. It is for the obedience of faith that the gospel, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known to all nations, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. The word of reconciliation, and the divine evidence of its truth, are well calculated to beget faith; and it is by faith in Christ's blood, or in the sufficiency of his atonement, that sinners receive the reconciliation, are actually justified, and enjoy peace with God, Rom. iii. 25. chap: v. 1, 10, 11.

3. *Lastly*, The ministry of reconciliation is intended to be the means of gaining upon the hearts of sinners, and of reconciling them to God. The apostles declared to men, "That God was by Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and that he accomplished this by "making him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This is termed "the word of reconciliation," not only because it reveals that reconciliation for sin which is already made by the death of Christ, and in which God is fully satisfied; but also because it contains every argument and motive which is suited to subdue the enmity of the human heart, and "is mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations," or reasonings, "and every

high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The apostles did not satisfy themselves with having barely stated the doctrine of reconciliation, but were solicitous that it should produce its proper effects upon the hearts of their hearers. They spoke to men as condemned criminals, ready to perish, and exposed to the wrath of Almighty God; at the same time they declared unto them a full and free salvation through Christ for the very chief of sinners, and upon this ground they urged upon them repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. This they pressed home upon them with such earnestness as was suited to the importance and interesting nature of the subject, and they used the most forcible motives both to awaken their fears and encourage their hopes: knowing the terror of the Lord they persuaded men, 2 Cor. v. 11. Acts xiii. 40, 41. chap. xxiv. 25., but they chiefly endeavoured to gain upon them by the allurements of his mercy and grace: in declaring God's message of peace to guilty rebels they followed it up with the most earnest and affectionate entreaties, as it were from the mouth of Christ himself: "We are, (says the apostle) ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." This answers to the commission in the parable, "Compel them to come in," Luke xiv. 23. and thus it is that God draws men freely, but powerfully, with cords of a man, with bands of love, Hos. xi. 4. We all know that the earnest and important entreaties, even of men, have a considerable influence upon the most obdurate and inflexible minds; and that they often prevail when all other methods have proved ineffectual to move them: but that

the great God should send his ambassadors, not only to command, but to entreat and beseech his rebellious creatures to be reconciled to him is truly amazing condescension: yet the argument by which these entreaties are enforced, and on which they are founded, is still more wonderfull, namely, “ For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Christ crucified is the great reconciling object. Here divine justice and the conscience of an awakened sinner meet in one common ground of satisfaction. Justice requires no more, and the sinner believing this, is satisfied and reconciled to God. It is the influence of the cross of Christ that draws sinners to himself: “ And I, (says he) if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John xii. 32. And so the preaching of Christ crucified is unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 13, 23, 24. Yet we are also informed, and observation confirms it, that to many it is a stumbling-block and foolishness; and this shews that the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to make the word of reconciliation produce its proper effect upon the minds of sinners, so as to reconcile them to God.

SERMON VII.

THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL TESTIMONY AND
PROMISES.



2 COR. i. 18, 19, 20.

But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us.

THE apostle Paul, near the end of his former epistle to the Corinthians, had promised to come unto them when he should pass through Macedonia, and perhaps tarry with them during the winter. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 5—8. with 2 Cor. i. 15, 16. But as he had not hitherto performed his promise as he intended, some of his adversaries, who called in question his apostleship, were puffed up as though he would not come unto them, or dare to confront them, notwithstanding all the weighty and powerful things he had written to them while at a distance, 1 Cor. iv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. x. 9, 10. It appears also that they took occasion from his delay in coming to

them, to insinuate that he used lightness, promising what he had no intention to perform, or at least not regarding what he said, or concerning himself afterwards about it, but promising or retracting, affirming or denying the same thing as it served his turn; but this false insinuation they made use of to discredit his mission and doctrine, representing him as a man whose word was not to be depended on.

In answer to this, he asserts the truth and sincerity of his intention when he promised to come unto them: "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?" ver 17. He neither promised falsely, nor from any wrong design, nor did he purpose it in his own strength: but expressed himself as one depending entirely on the will and direction of the Lord: "It MAY BE that I will abide with you, and winter with you. I TRUST to tarry a while with you, IF THE LORD PERMIT." 1 Cor. xvi. 6, 7. But he also, in the most solemn manner, declares the reason why he had delayed his visit to them; a reason which, while it showed his lenity towards them, was not much to their credit. "Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth," ver. 23. There were disorders among them which he wished to have rectified by means of his letters before he came to them in person; for he did not chuse, if possible, to come to them with a rod, but in love, and in the spirit of meekness, chap iv. 21. and therefore he deferred his visit, and wrote these things to them, being absent, lest being present he should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord had given him to edification, and not to destruction, chap. xiii. 2, 10.

But his great concern was not so much for his own character, as for the credit of the gospel which was committed to him, and which he and his fellow-labourers had preached unto them. Therefore he declares in the most solemn manner, “ But, as God is true, our word to you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay,” *i. e.* variable and inconsistent with itself, “ but in him was yea,” *i. e.* the unchangeable consistent truth as it is in Jesus. “ For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us, *i. e.* to the glory of God’s power, faithfulness, and grace, by means of our ministry.” And as an evidence of their being the approved ministers of Christ, he mentions their having the anointing, sealing, and earnest of the Spirit in their hearts, ver. 18—23.

The chief doctrine contained in these words is this, That the gospel *testimony* concerning Christ, and all the *promises* of God in him, are absolutely TRUE and FAITHFUL.

The gospel contains the most important and interesting news that ever was proclaimed to the children of men ; yet none will be benefitted by it but those who believe its truth. To credit this is *faith* : to discredit it is *unbelief*. All its influence in making men holy or happy is just in proportion as they are made to perceive its truth and excellency, so as to esteem it a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation ; and the real radical cause of all their perplexing doubts and fears, as well as of their disconformity to Christ, may be traced to the want or weakness of faith in the truth of the gospel. I shall therefore briefly consider,

I. The TESTIMONY of the gospel with its evidence.

II. The PROMISES of God with their truth and certainty.

I. The gospel TESTIMONY respects the person, mission, character, and work of Christ. The apostle says, that he and his fellow-labourers preached among them "the Son of God, Jesus Christ." They testified, that he is *the Son of God*, Acts ix. 20. or the Word made flesh, John i. 14. Emmanuel, God with us, Matt. i. 23. God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16.—That he is *Jesus* the Saviour, Matt. i. 21. The *Christ* or *Messiah*, *i. e.* the anointed prophet, priest, and king, who had been so long promised and expected, Acts ix. 22. chap. iii. 22. Heb. vii. 17. Matt. xxi. 5.—That he was sent, and came into the world to save sinners, 1 John iv. 9, 10. 1 Tim. i. 15.—That he died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. And that he is exalted to the highest dignity and dominion, and vested with all power and authority to save his people and to judge the world, Philip. ii. 9, 10, 11. Acts x. 42. 2 Cor. v. 10.

2. The *evidence* for the truth of this testimony appears, 1. From its being the exact accomplishment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, Luke xxiv. 27, 44. Acts x. 43. chap. xxvi. 22, 23. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12.—2. From the Father's immediate testimony from heaven to his person and mission, Mat. iii. 17. chap. xvii. 5. 2 Pet. i. 17.—3. From the miracles which he performed himself, John v. 36. chap. xx. 30, 31.—4. From his resurrection from the dead, which was a decisive proof, Rom. i. 4.—5. From the number and qualifications of the chosen witnesses, which fully establish the facts which they testified,

and the doctrine which they taught; in confirmation of which God also bore them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his own will, John xv. 26, 27. Acts x. 39. Heb. ii. 4—6. To these proofs we may add, the glorious display of the character of the true God in the whole scheme of redemption beyond every other manifestation which he hath made of himself, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The apostle, therefore, had good grounds to affirm, in the most peremptory and solemn manner, that the word which he and his fellow-labourers had preached among them concerning the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was not yea and nay, but as true *as God is true*; for it was really the testimony of God himself which he hath testified of his Son, 1 John v. 9, 10. We shall now,

II. Consider the PROMISES, with their truth and certainty.

1. The apostle here mentions in general, “all the promises of God.” Taking this in the most extensive sense it may include,

(1.) All the promises which God made in former ages to the patriarchs, and by Moses and the prophets, respecting the coming of Christ and the work of redemption by him; such as—The promise made to Abraham of blessing all nations in his seed, Gen. xxii. 18, Gal. iii. 8. The promise which the Lord made by Moses, that he would raise them up a prophet like unto him, Deut. xviii. 18. Acts iii. 22. The promise made unto David, that he would raise up the Messiah of his seed to sit for ever on his throne, Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4. Acts ii. 30. chap. xiii. 23. and all the succeeding prophecies

and promises respecting the coming and sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. See Ps. xxii. Isa. liii. The saints of old received not the accomplishment of these promises in this life, but saw them afar off, embraced them, and died in the faith of them, Heb. xi. 13. The gospel testimony is just a declaration of the accomplishment of these promises ; so that the truth of them stands or falls with that testimony. They are all yea and amen in Christ ; for in him they are all verified and fulfilled. Indeed Christ himself is the great subject of these promises, and all promised blessings are included in him, and procured by him. But I apprehend,

(2.) That the promises which the apostle had more immediately in view are those of the gospel, or of the new covenant, which are founded on the accomplishment of the former promises respecting Christ and the work he was to finish. The gospel testifies, that, according to God's promise, Christ hath already come, and hath finished the work of redemption by his obedience unto death ; that he was raised from the dead, and is exalted at the right hand of God, a Prince and a Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Now the gospel calls upon all that hear it to believe the testimony concerning Christ, and it connects the promise of salvation with the belief of that testimony ; " He that believeth shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16. " Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. " If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. 9. Faith itself is the gift of God, and is given in the behalf of Christ, Eph. ii. 8. Philip. i. 29. and the promise of salvation, which is

connected with it, comprises in it all the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, 2 Pet. i. 4. all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 3. That is, all the blessed fruits of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession, which ultimately issue in the enjoyment of everlasting heavenly happiness.

The new covenant was made in the blood of Christ, and established upon better promises than the old. Herein God promises, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Heb. viii. 10. This promise comprehends every spiritual blessing: it is expressive of a spiritual and eternal relation between him and them, and imports his acting towards them in a suitability to that relation, and his forming and purifying them to be a peculiar people to himself, that they may shew forth his praise. His being their God imports—(1.) His *justifying* them; that is, his pardoning their sins, and receiving them into a state of favour as his people. So the apostle says, he is the God both of believing Jews and Gentiles, "Seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith," Rom. iii. 29, 30. This blessing is one of the capital promises of the covenant, "For, saith the Lord, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. viii. 12. And the apostle connects this promise with the one offering of Christ, by which he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, chap. x. 14, 17, 18. (2.) His being their God imports, his *adopting* them into his family as his children. To be their God and Father signifies the same thing, and so does their being his people and his children, Rom. ix. 25, 26. 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18. Rev. xxi. 7. Christ was made under the law to redeem them that were under it, that we might receive the adop-

tion of sons, and also the spirit of adoption, Gal. iv. 4—8. and it is by faith in Christ Jesus that they become the sons and children of God, Gal. iii. 27. John i. 12. and so are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. (3.) It imports his *sanctifying* them, not merely in a sacrificial sense, or by separating or consecrating them to himself, but also by making them partakers of his holiness by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, forming them anew after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. Tit. iii. 5. For this is his promise to the subjects of the new covenant, “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts—for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest,” Heb. viii. 10. 11. Thus he delivers them from the dominion and servitude of sin, and fits them for the service and enjoyment of himself. (4.) It imports his causing them to *persevere* in faith and holiness unto the end; for in connection with the promise of his being their God, he says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,” Jer. xxxii. 38—41. Christ hath promised to give unto his sheep eternal life, and that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his or his Father’s hands, John x. 28, 29. The apostle Paul frequently mentions the faithfulness of God as a security for the perseverance of the saints. See 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. chap. x. 13. 1 Thess. v. 24. 2 Thess. iii. 3. And thus they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5. (5.) His being their God imports his *raising them from the dead*. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead; but our Lord proves it from the words of God to Moses, when he called himself

the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, adding, "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." Luke xx. 37, 38. So that they "are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection," ver. 36. and this is the adoption they wait for, viz. the redemption of their body, Rom. viii. 23. This is that blessed resurrection of the body which Christ so frequently promises to his followers, John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54. which was exemplified in his own resurrection, and of which the apostle treats at large in 1 Cor. xv. (6.) *Lastly*, His being their God imports his putting them in possession of the heavenly inheritance, Heb. ix. 15. This inheritance is reserved in heaven for them as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. and it is described as incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, 1 Pet. i. 4. The faithful patriarchs had the promise of the earthly inheritance; but it was not the ultimate object of their faith and hope, nor a portion answerable to the relation in which God stood to them as their God: "But now," says the apostle, "they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city," Heb. xi. 16. God hath promised that "he that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son," Rev. xxi. 7. For "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." 1 John ii. 25.

These are indeed exceeding great and precious promises. They are fully answerable to all the wants of the children of God, and highly exceeding their most enlarged conceptions. Let us now consider.

2. The infallible *truth* and *certainly* of these promises. The truth of them is what the apostle affirms

when he says, "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God." The consideration of this has a direct tendency to strengthen our faith and increase our consolation in them. Now these promises must be true and certain as to their accomplishment,

(1.) Because they are *the promises of God*, as the apostle here declares. Faithfulness and truth are essential to God, so that it is impossible for him to lie, or to falsify his word, Heb. vi. 18. He abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 13. He is also of almighty *power*, and so fully able to accomplish all his promises. Abraham's faith rested on the faithfulness of God, and his ability to accomplish what he had promised, though it required that power which quickeneth the dead; and thus he gave glory to God, Rom. iv. 17—22. God's promises are all yea and amen unto his glory. He glorifies himself in making and fulfilling his promises; and we glorify him in believing them upon his word; for this is to have worthy thoughts of his character, and to trust his faithfulness, power, and grace. If it be asked, How do we know that they are the promises of God, or that his faithfulness is engaged to make them good? It may be answered, That we have the same evidence for this that we have for the truth of the gospel testimony. The gospel facts are the fulfilment of the promises made unto the fathers, and in successive ages by the prophets, respecting the coming of the Messiah, his sufferings and following glory, and demonstrate that they are the promises of Him unto whom are known all his works from the beginning of the world, Acts xv. 18. for who else could declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which the gospel testifies to be now circumstantially accomplished? The Lord distinguishes the word which he hath spoken from

all false prophecies by its coming to pass, Deut. xviii. 21, 22. and, referring to gospel times when his promises should be fulfilled, he says, "Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day, that I am he that doth speak, behold it is I," Isa. lii. 6.

(2.) When God made promise to Abraham respecting his seed, and his blessing all nations in him, he confirmed it with an oath. Gen. xxii. 16—19. and because he could swear by no greater, as men do, he swore by himself. His word was equally true and faithful with his oath, it being as impossible for God to lie in the one as in the other; but yet, being willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he condescended, for the confirmation of their faith, to interpose with an oath, that we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, *i. e.* on Christ, Heb. vi. 13—19. And now that God has performed the mercy promised to the fathers, and remembered his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to Abraham, Luke i. 72, 73. we have the highest evidence that these promises were made by God, and consequently that they are all true and faithful.

(3.) The promises which God hath already fulfilled, as declared in the gospel, give the highest assurance of the fulfilment of all the other promises which yet remain to be accomplished. It was a glorious and demonstrative proof of God's power and faithfulness, in accomplishing his promises to old Israel, when Joshua could appeal to them in these striking words: "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to

pass unto you; and not one thing hath failed thereof," Josh. xxiii. 14. Though many dark providences had intervened, which seemed to thwart the promises; yet God punctually accomplished all he had promised to Abraham respecting them, Gen. xv. 7—17. and brought them into the possession of the Gentiles. Yet these promises, in their letter, were only temporal, and typical of those we are now speaking of. When we take a view of the promises respecting the coming of Christ, and the work he was to finish for the redemption of sinners, and compare them with their exact accomplishment as declared in the gospel, may not I appeal to you, my brethren, as Joshua did to old Israel? Do ye not know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all that is written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning him? And are there any of all the promises of God so great, so astonishingly wonderful, or which require a greater stretch of faith, than those which he hath already accomplished? And does not the accomplishment of them demonstrate in the highest degree the faithfulness of the Promiser, and the exceeding riches of his grace towards perishing sinners, and so give full security for the accomplishment of all his other promises in due time? Especially too, when we consider the inseparable connection of these promises with those which have been already fulfilled, and that the end of fulfilling them was to open a way for the accomplishment of all these other promises in a consistency with the divine character. The apostle sums up the whole of this argument in these words, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. And again, "For if, when

we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," chap. v. 10.

(4.) All the promises of the new covenant are ratified and confirmed by the blood of the Son of God. The new covenant is said to be *in his blood*, which is termed " the blood of the everlasting covenant," Heb. xiii. 20. And as this covenant is established upon better promises than the covenant made at Sinai, so these promises are all confirmed and ratified by the sacrifice of Christ: and hence it is compared to a testament which is of force by the death of the testator, Heb. ix. 16, 17. His death hath not only ratified the promises, but is also the procuring cause of all the blessings promised, and by means of it they who are called receive the promise of eternal inheritance, verse 15. I shall only add,

(5.) That Christ being raised from the dead and glorified, is in possession of all spiritual blessings as heir of all things, and head of his body the church. All promised blessings are secured in him, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell ; and he has full power to bestow them upon all whom the Father hath given him. So that God hath already blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, Eph. i. 3. Thus all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God.

From the doctrine of our text we may see,

1. The sure foundation that is laid for our faith in Christ. If the testimony of the gospel concerning the Son of God be indeed *the testimony of God* himself, and as true as he is true, and if he has given *sufficient evidence*, that it is *his* testimony, then it certainly

demands the fullest assurance of faith. If we receive and sustain the witness of fallible men in the most important affairs of life, and even in matters of life and death, surely we must admit that the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son, is infinitely greater, and therefore requires our firmest belief, and most unlimited confidence, 1 John v. 9. Let us see then that we have received this testimony, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God: for though we may have some persuasion that the gospel is true; yet if we do not receive it as God's testimony, we do not really believe God as the testifier; for he that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true, John iii. 33. Hence also we may learn the nature of unbelief: it consists not in self-jealousy, nor in the want of a confident assurance of actual interest in Christ; but in not believing what the gospel testifies concerning him; and this being the testimony of God himself, and clearly evidenced to be so, he that believeth it not hath made God a liar, because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son, 1 John v. 10. This shews the heinous nature of unbelief, and that it is seated not merely in simple ignorance, but in the love of darkness and hatred of the light, John iii. 19. chap. xv. 22—25.

2. It is only in believing what the gospel testifies of Christ and the work of salvation by him, that we can perceive the love and grace of God towards perishing sinners, or have any well-founded hope in his mercy; for it is in this that God hath manifested his love, and commended it towards us, 1 John iv. 9. Rom. v. 8. It is evident then, that all who really believe the gospel must perceive it to be not only a faithful and true saying, but a saying supremely excellent and good, and

so worthy of all acceptance ; for it declares that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them, 1 Tim. i. 15. and this salvation includes all the promises of God.

3. All who believe in Christ have an interest in him, and so a right to all the promises of God through him. These promises unfold the nature and extent of that salvation which he hath procured, and is conferred on all those who are drawn to him of the Father. They lay open a wide field for the believer's most delightful contemplation, whether he considers the magnitude, suitableness, and preciousness of the blessings promised, they being all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, or the security he has for their accomplishment, they being all the promises of a faithful God, laid in the constitution of the new covenant, and ratified in the blood of Christ, in whom they are all yea and amen, to the glory of God.

4. Though the promises of the gospel are all made in Christ, and the blessings promised are bestowed on account of his righteousness, which is the foundation of our title to them, and not any thing wrought in us, or done by us ; yet they generally run in a certain order or tenor, and are connected with our faith and obedience ; and we are not to expect the accomplishment of them in any other way. Thus the promise of salvation is made to him that believeth, Mark xvi. 16.—of the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13.—of abiding in Christ's love to those who keep his commandments, John xv. 10.—of the crown of life to him that overcometh, and is faithful unto death, Rev. ii. 10. &c. &c. It is godliness that has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Though the promises

are sure to all the elect by an eternal purpose of grace in Christ; yet it is by continuing in faith, love, and obedience, that their election and interest in the promises is manifested; and it is only by this evidence that we can expect the Spirit itself to bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, or that we can attain to the full assurance of hope. The promises were never given to foster slothfulness, carnal security or presumption; but to support, animate, and encourage the people of God to hold fast the faith amidst all their present conflicts, and to be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as they are assured by these promises that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Let us therefore be exhorted to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised, Heb. x. 23. Let us live by the faith of Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen; and let us meditate upon these promises, not in a general or cursory manner, but by a particular consideration and use of them, according to our various circumstances and wants. Let us imitate the Psalmist in pleading them: "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me," Psal. cxix. 49, 50. Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. and let them encourage us to a persevering diligence in the work of faith, and ministering labour of love to the name of Christ unto the end; that we be not slothful, or weary in well-doing, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, Heb. vi. 10—12.

SERMON VIII.

THE GREAT OBJECT AND END OF THE PROPHETIC
DISPENSATION.



1 PET. i. 10, 11.

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

THE apostle having mentioned the lively hope of the heavenly inheritance to which believers were begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the unspeakable joy which they had under their present sufferings in the prospect of receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls ; he proceeds to confirm those he writes to in their hope and joy by observing, that this salvation was the subject of prophecy in former ages ; and that the prophets, who did not fully understand their own predictions, nor the exact manner or time of their accomplishment, had

“enquired and searched diligently, what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;” and that it was revealed to them, that their predictions were not to be fulfilled in their own days, but in after times; so that in prophesying, they did not so properly minister to themselves or their cotemporaries, as to New Testament believers, who have seen and enjoyed the accomplishment of these prophecies, and have heard them explained and applied by those who have preached the gospel to them, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven: and that those things which were formerly foretold, and are now fulfilled and clearly revealed by the gospel, are so wonderful, so excellent and glorious, that the angels with earnest desire (*παροξυνῶσι*) bend down to contemplate them. From this passage, we propose very briefly to consider,

I. The scripture IDEA of prophecy.

II. The great OBJECT and END of the prophetic dispensation.

III. The EVIDENCE it bears to the truth of the Christian religion.

IV. Answer some OBJECTIONS.

I. Prophecy may be defined, *A foretelling of such future events as no created sagacity could foresee, and which therefore none but God could reveal.*

1. It is a *foretelling of future events.* The apostle in this passage describes it to be a “testifying before-hand;” and so the Lord repeatedly represents it when challenging the heathen deities to give a proof of their divinity, “Shew us what shall happen—declare us

things for to come—shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods,” Isa. xli. 22, 23.

2. The events foretold must be such as *no created sagacity could foresee*. There are some future events which may be foreseen by men in a natural way, particularly such as fall within the ordinary and established course of things. Past experience and observation may throw light upon many things to come both in the natural and moral world, and enable men, from certain existing causes, to guess pretty nearly at their natural effects. But prophecy is quite another thing: it reveals futurities, which could never be known by all that falls within the compass of human observation, experience or reason. This is intimated in the text, where we are told, that the prophets themselves “enquired and searched diligently, what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify,” in the prophecies which they themselves delivered. Their predictions were so far from being the fruit of their own penetration, study or reasoning, that they did not in the first instance clearly understand them; but had afterwards to enquire and search diligently into their meaning. Indeed the subjects of scripture prophecy are such as to be equally beyond the sagacity of angels as of men to foresee them. Angels are doubtless possessed of higher natural powers than mortals are; but the omniscience and foreknowledge which appears in the prophetic revelation, belongs not to a created nature. Angels were indeed sometimes employed in revealing future things to the prophets; but these things were first revealed to themselves. The revelation was communicated to John by an angel, but that angel received it from Jesus Christ, Rev. i. 1. chap. xxii. 16. and he

refused worship from John, because he was not the original author of that revelation, (a thing peculiar to God,) but was only John's fellow-servant, and a fellow-servant of his brethren the prophets, in making it known, chap. xix. 10. chap. xxii. 9. Our text informs us, that angels as well as prophets desire to look into these things, ver. 12. and the manifold wisdom of God is made known to them by the church, Eph. iii. 9, 10.

3. Prophecy respects things *which none but God could reveal*. They are things which have no existence but in the divine mind and purpose, and therefore no creature can have the least conception of them until God is pleased to make them known. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" Rom. xi. 34. "For what man knoweth the things," the secret designs and purposes, "of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. It is plain, therefore, that the divine omniscient Spirit, who searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, must be the original source of prophetic revelation; and so the apostle expressly declares, that it was the Spirit of Christ in the prophets that testified before-hand the things which are now published by the gospel as fulfilled. And this idea he lays down as a first principle, when exhorting Christians to take heed to the more sure word of prophecy; "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation," or the dictates of the prophets own Spirit; "for the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. Let us now consider,

II. The great END and DESIGN of the prophetic dispensation. And,

1. One important end of it was to give a striking manifestation of the true God, as distinguished from all idols and lying vanities, for he characterizes himself by this very thing; "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and before time, that we may say, He is righteous? Yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words," Isa. xli. 21—27. "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images. Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them," chap. xlii. 8, 9. "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last; and besides me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come? let them shew unto them," chap. xlv. 6, 7. "They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell me, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? And there is no God else beside me: a just God, and a

Saviour; there is none beside me," chap. xlv. 20, 21. "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," chap. xlvi. 9, 10. "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them: I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I have shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image hath commanded them," chap. xlviii. 3—6. When God declares the end from the beginning, it demonstrates his perfect *foreknowledge*, and that "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts xv. 18. It manifests not merely his foresight, but his *determinate counsel* and *purposes*; so we find his foreknowledge and determinate counsel connected, Acts ii. 23. For what is prophecy, but a revelation of his fixed purpose to do or permit what he thus reveals? It demonstrates his *almighty power* and *truth* in accomplishing what he hath foretold. It shows that he has the government of all things, and the disposal of all events in his hand; that he can regulate and adjust all the moral springs of action in free agents to subserve his purpose, and counterwork all opposition to it. In short, that he is able to work all things after the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11. But,

2. The great object and end of the prophetic dispensation, as declared in our text, was to "testify before

hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Christ directs the Jews to search the scriptures, and says, "they are they which testify of me," John v. 39. His disciples were greatly disconcerted by his death; but after his resurrection he blames them for their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; and asks, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself," Luke xxiv. 26, 27. And he tells them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me," ver. 44. The apostle Peter, having adduced the testimony of Moses, adds, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days," Acts iii. 22—25. And in general, he says, "To him gave all the prophets witness," chap. x. 43. Paul declares that in preaching the gospel, or "witnessing both to small and great," he was "saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles," Acts xxvi. 22, 23. From these passages it is evident, that the great scope and ultimate design of prophecy in general, was to bear testimony to Christ, and the affairs of his kingdom. And this is what the angel means when he says to John, "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," Rev. xix. 10. which imports, that the testimony concerning Jesus is the real scope and spirit of the whole

dispensation of prophecy, and that it has its ultimate accomplishment in him, and in the affairs of his government.

If we take a view of prophecy, we shall find that it is of vast extent. It commenced with the fall of man, continued through successive ages, and with increasing light, to the coming of the long expected Messiah, and from thence it reaches forward to the consummation of all things. Yet we need not wonder that such an immense series of prophecy should be intended to bear witness to Jesus, or to attest his mission, if we admit what the scriptures clearly reveal concerning the divine dignity of his person as the Son of God, the important nature of his mission, and its beneficial and extensive effects in the eternal salvation of an innumerable multitude of perishing sinners of all nations, kindreds, and tongues. In this view, therefore, we cannot possibly conceive of any end of the prophetic dispensation, so important, or so worthy of God, as that which is assigned to it, namely, to give testimony to Jesus. We shall now consider,

III. The EVIDENCE arising from prophecy of the truth of the Christian religion.

We have already noticed, that prophecy is a foretelling of such future events as no created sagacity could foresee, and which therefore none but God could reveal. If then it can appear that prophecies of this description (and there are no other real prophecies) apply to Jesus, and were circumstantially accomplished in him, and in no other person, they must amount to a clear testimony from God himself to his character and mission, and consequently to the truth and divine authority of all he has revealed, commanded, or promised.

In taking a view of this evidence, it will be proper to specify some of the leading prophecies in the writings of the Old Testament, and compare them with their application and accomplishment under the New.

When we look into these prophecies we find, that, immediately after the fall of man, a *Deliverer was promised* to come of the seed of the woman, who was to bruise the head of the serpent, that deceived her. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,” Gen. iii. 15. Compare this with Luke i. 29—36. “And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God; and, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name *Jesus*. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Thus “when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,” Gal. iv. 4. —He was to be of *the seed of Abraham*, according to Gen. xxii. 18. “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Hence the apostle tells the Galatians, that, “to Abraham and *his seed* were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ,” Gal. iii. 16. “For verily he took not on him the

nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham," Heb. ii. 16.—He was to spring *of the tribe of Judah*, according to the prediction of the patriarch Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix. 10. The apostle takes notice of this, Heb. vii. 14. "For it is evident, that our Lord sprang out of Judah."—He was to be *of the royal family of David*, according to 2 Sam. vii. 12—16. "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom: he shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son." The same prediction is repeated, Isa. xi. 1. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots," &c. And also in Jer. xxii. 5, 6. "Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days shall Judah be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." We may compare these predictions with Luke i. 32. "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," and ver. 69. "He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David." And so the apostle testifies, "that Jesus Christ our Lord was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," Rom. i. 3.—Further, the Messiah was *to be born in Bethlehem-Judah*, the city of David, according to Micah v. 2. "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be

little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me (Him) that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The evangelist Matthew informs us that "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king," ver. 1. and that when Herod demanded of the chief Priests and Scribes, where Christ should be born, they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judea," and directed him for proof of it to the prophecy of Micah, now quoted.—Moreover, he was to be miraculously conceived and born of a Virgin, Isa. vii. 14. "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The evangelist Matthew quotes this prophecy, and shews its fulfilment in the birth of Jesus Christ, Matth. i. 20—24.—Again, the Messiah was *to be taken into Egypt*, and called out of it. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt," Hos. xi. 1. Agreeably to this, we read that the parents of Jesus, to avoid the wrath of Herod, was divinely instructed to take the young child, and flee into Egypt, which they did, and remained there until the death of Herod, when they returned—thus fulfilling the prediction of Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my son, Matt. ii. 13—16."—The prophets had foretold that his advent was *to be preceded by a forerunner* in the spirit and power of Elias or Elijah, preparing his way, Isa. xl. 3, 4. Mal. iii. 1. and chap. iv. 5. The language of the prophets was, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and

the heart of the children to their fathers," &c. These texts are quoted by the evangelists, who show us their accomplishment in the mission and ministry of John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 1—4. chap. xvii. 10—14. Luke i. 17. chap. vii. 17. "This," says Jesus, when speaking of the Baptist, "is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."—The Messiah was *to confirm his mission and doctrine by miracles*, according to Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." Our Lord directed the attention of the disciples of John to this prophecy, and referred them for its fulfilment to the miracles which they themselves saw him perform, Matt. xi. 3—7. "Go," said he, in answer to the enquiry, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another," "Go, tell John again those things which ye both hear and see,—the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk: the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear: the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." To these miracles we find Jesus himself appealing in attestation of his mission and doctrines thus, John v. 36. "I have greater witness then that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." His apostles make the same appeal, "Ye men of Israel, Hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know," Acts ii. 22.—The prophets also foretold that *the Messiah should make a public, though lowly entrance into Jeru-*

salem, riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass : “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion : shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold thy king cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass,” Zech. ix. 9. with Ps. cxviii. 25, 26. We have the fulfilment of this in Matt. xxi. 2—12. and John xii. 12—19.—The Messiah was *to be rejected by his countrymen the Jews*, Isa. viii. 14, 15. chap. xxviii. 16. and liii. 3. Ps. cxviii. 22. “ He shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel ; for a gin, and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem : and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” Thus saith the Lord, “ Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.” “ He is despised and rejected of men : a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and we hid as it were our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” “ The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner.” In the New Testament these various predictions are applied to Christ, and their circumstantial accomplishment shewn in the history of Jesus of Nazareth. See Matt. xxii. 42—46. John i. 10, 11. chap. xii. 37—42. chap. xv. 22—26.—He was *to be betrayed by one of his disciples*, or as the Psalmist expresses it, “ Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me,” Ps. xli. 9. which Jesus himself applies to the treachery of Judas Iscariot, John xiii. 18.—Zechariah specifies the sum which the traitor should receive, viz. thirty pieces of silver, ch. xi. 12. and in Matt. xxvi. 14. we are told that Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests, who

covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; and in ch. xxvii. 3—10. we have the history of his treacherous proceedings.—Isaiah speaks of him in prophecy as “*giving his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; not hiding his face from shame and spitting,*” ch. l. 6. The evangelist tells us, “Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,” &c. Matt. xxvi. 67, 68. and ch. xxvii. 26. “And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.” It was further predicted that by nailing him to the cross they should pierce his hands and his feet, Ps. xxii. 16. the fulfilment of which is recorded Luke xxiii. 33. John xix. 17, 18.—He was *to be numbered with transgressors*, according to Isa. liii. 12. and the historian records that Jesus was crucified between two malefactors, Luke xxii. 37. ch. xxiii. 33.—The Psalmist in prophecy speaks of him as being *mocked and reviled, while on the cross*, Ps. xxii. 7, 8. and in Matt. xxvii. 39—44. we have a literal and most circumstantial narrative of the fulfilment of this.—It was farther said that *they should give him gall and vinegar to drink*, Ps. lxix. 21. and Matthew twice records the fact, “They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall,” ch. xxvii. 34. and again, ver. 48. it is said, “and straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.”—It was said *they should part his garments* among them, and cast lots upon his vesture, Ps. xxii. 18. and the evangelist says “They parted his garments, casting lots,” Matt. xxvii. 35. But the account of the matter given us by another evangelist is much more particular: “The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part:

and also his coat, of which they said, let us not rend it, but cast lots whose it shall be, for it was without seam, woven from the top throughout," John xix. 23, 24.—The Messiah was *to be cut off from the land of the living by a violent death*, Is. liii. and Dan. ix. 26. "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." And when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said "It is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost," John xix. 30. So Peter charges his death upon the Jews as a most free and deliberate murder on their part. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23.—It was foretold that in piercing him *not a bone of him should be broken*, Ps. xxxiv. 20. Zech. xii. 20. with Exod. xii. 46. agreeably to the type of the Paschal lamb. And how literally this was accomplished in Jesus may be seen in John xix. 33—38.—He was *to make his grave with the rich*, according to Isa. liii. 9. which was fulfilled in the conduct of Joseph, a rich man of Arimathea, who begged the body of Jesus, took it down from the cross, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock, Matt. xxvii. 57—60.—The Messiah was *not to see corruption in the grave*, as was foretold, Ps. xvi. 10. which is quoted by the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, and expounded to the Jews, as having met its full accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth, Acts ii. 25—32. and also by Paul in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, Acts xiii. 34—38.—He was *to rise from the dead*, according to many prophetic intimations. Thus Ps. ii. 7. "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of

joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands," Isa. liii. 10. Peter shews the fulfilment of these in the person of Christ, Acts ii. 30, 31. and Paul confirms the same truth, Acts xiii. 33, 34.—His *ascension into heaven* was also the subject of ancient prophecy, where he was to sit at the right hand of God, and pour out the Holy Spirit in his various gifts upon men. Thus David writes concerning him: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," Ps. lxxviii. 18. Again, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Ps. cx. 1. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, &c.—and upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit," Joel ii. 28, 29. The apostles adduce these texts, and shew their accomplishment in the ascension and exaltation of Christ, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit, first on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards on the primitive church. See Eph. iv. 8—13. Mark xvi. 19. Acts ii. 33.

With regard to the divine dignity of this person, though he was to be of the seed of Abraham and of David according to the flesh; yet he was to be called Immanuel, Isa. vii. 14. the Mighty God, ch. ix. 6. Jehovah God, ch. xl. 3, 10. Jehovah our Righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.—the Son of God, 2 Sam. vii. 14. Ps. ii. 7, 12.—David's Lord, Ps. cx. 1. Compare these passages with Matt. i. 23. Tit. ii. 13. Luke i. 76.

John i. 1, 14. ch. x. 30. Rom. ix. 5. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Rom. i. 3, 4. Heb. i. 5. Matt. xxii. 42—46.

As to his official character and mission, he was to be a *Prophet* raised up unto Israel of their brethren, like unto Moses, Deut. xviii. 18. Now though many famous prophets were raised up unto Israel in successive ages for more than a thousand years after this; yet we are told, that “there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,” &c. Deut. xxxiii. 10—12. It is likely that these words were added by Ezra after the captivity: but whatever be in this, it is clear, that the Jews were still looking for this great prophet at the time in which Jesus appeared; see John i. 21, 25. chap. vi. 14. and to him the apostle Peter actually applies this prophecy, Acts iii. 22—24.—He was to be a *Priest* after the order of Melchisedec, Ps. cx. 4. This prophecy is applied to Jesus, and explained at large, Heb. v. 5, 8. chap. vii. viii. ix. x.—He was to be a *King*, Ps. ii. 6. and so is termed Messiah or the Christ, *i. e.* the Anointed, Ps. ii. 2. Dan. ix. 26. and under this character both the Jews and Samaritans were expecting him, Matt. ii. 4. John i. 41. chap. iv. 25. chap. vii. 41—43. Now all the prophecies respecting the King Messiah are directly applied to Jesus throughout the writings of the New Testament, the purport of which is to evince this great truth, that Jesus is the promised Messiah, John xx. 30, 31. Acts ii. 36. There are many prophecies respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, and the extension of its blessings to the Gentiles, which are explained of, and applied to the administration of Jesus, such as Gen. xxii. 18. Ps. xlv. 6, 7. Isa. ix. 6—8. chap. xi. 1—11. chap. xlix. 6. compared with Gal. iii. 8. Heb. i. 8, 9. Luke i. 30—34. Rom. xiv. 12. Acts xiii. 47. True indeed, several of

these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled, at least to their full extent, and some of them will not have a complete accomplishment till the consummation of all things ; but enough has been already accomplished to justify the apostolic application of these prophecies to Jesus ; enough, surely, to illustrate the truth of what our text affirms, *viz.* that what the Spirit of Christ in the prophets did testify before-hand had a respect to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow : so that, according to the true intent and meaning of the Spirit in these prophecies, “ Christ OUGHT to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory,” Luke xxiv. 25, 26. and this being already fulfilled, gives full security for the accomplishment of all the rest.

On the Old Testament prophecies, of which I have only produced a specimen, it may be useful to make a few remarks,

1. They are very *numerous*, and pervade a considerable part of the Old Testament writings, see Luke xxiv. 27, 44. Acts iii. 22—25. Now, if such a number of predictions have been fulfilled, they cannot be mere conjectures, or the effusions of enthusiasm, nor can their pointed accomplishment in such a number of instances be attributed to what is called *chance*.

2. The particulars foretold are many of them so *wonderful*, so *singular*, and so far removed from the ordinary course of things, or so different from any thing that had ever taken place in the world before, that it was impossible for human sagacity to foresee them. Who then besides the omniscient God could reveal them before-hand ? or who but he, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, could accomplish them ? The prophets were not the authors of their predictions, but merely the organs through whom God was pleased

to reveal his purposes: "For the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man," *i. e.* by the contrivance, will, and pleasure of the prophets, or according to what they as men might *judge* to be best, "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21. The later prophets do not appear to have always understood the drift of the former, or either of them the whole scope of their own predictions; but enquired and searched diligently what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify. So that it is clear that it was God himself, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets.

3. Many of the prophecies concerning Christ are very *minute* and *particular*. They do not rest in generals, or in such descriptions and characters as may be applied to different persons; but they descend to minute circumstances, and describe the person in view by such distinguishing characters as will apply to none but himself. They not only foretel that he was to be the seed of the woman, to descend from Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and family of David; but they point out the place of his birth, the distinguishing transactions of his life, the peculiar circumstances relating to his sufferings and death, his resurrection from the dead, and exaltation to the right hand of God. They ascribe to him both divinity and humanity, the deepest abasement and greatest sufferings, and an advancement to the highest glory, honour, and dominion; and they also set forth the great end and design of all he was to do or suffer, *viz.* the redemption of sinners of mankind. Now, as these prophetic distinctive characters will apply to no person that has ever yet appeared in the world, excepting Jesus of Nazareth, he alone must undoubtedly

be the person of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.

4. Though the prophetic testimony concerning Jesus was not communicated wholly to one prophet, or at one period; but was revealed gradually (*πολυμερως*) in many parcels, Heb. i. 1. and to different persons, living in different and distant ages from one another, and to each of them some particular part of that revelation peculiar to himself; yet, whether we compare their prophecies with each other, or with the events in which they are said to be accomplished, we shall find no contradictions among them, but all is perfect *harmony* and *consistency*. This shows that they were all inspired by one divine Spirit, who had the whole connected series of these future events in his view at once.

5. Every particular contained in the prophecies, taken separately, gives its own distinct testimony to Jesus, and particular prophecies are often singly applied to him as occasion required; but the evidence is greatly increased when they are viewed collectively as forming a *connected system* of prophecy, in which all the parts are mutually dependent on each other, and closely united in one common object and end. As the scattered rays of light shine but feebly till they are united and made to bear upon one point; so there are particular prophecies which, when taken detachedly, have a degree of obscurity; but when we view them in their connection with other prophecies, as component parts of a system which has but one common end, these obscurities are removed by the light which the several parts of the system reciprocally reflect upon each other, as well as by their application in the New Testament. We are warranted to consider the prophecies in a systematic view; for if the gospel revelation forms a

connected system of divine truth, so must the prophecies, which have their accomplishment in that revelation, and correspond to it in every particular; and if a system consists of many particulars, dependent on each other, and intimately connected by their reference to a common end, doubtless the prophecies concerning Christ fall under that description.

6. These prophecies have, according to the time foretold, been *long ago accomplished* in the coming of the Messiah, his sufferings, and following glory. The writings of the New Testament clearly and circumstantially testify this. To him these prophecies are constantly applied, and appealed to, both by himself and his apostles, as a proof of his character and mission. That they were properly applicable to him is evident, from their exact agreement with the events relating to him, and to which they are applied; from their being utterly inapplicable to any other person or facts, and from the supernatural attestations by which such application was confirmed; such as the voice from the excellent glory, announcing Jesus to be the person promised, 2 Pet. i. 17. as did also his own miracles, John v. 36, 37. And as to his apostles, God bore witness to the truth of their testimony, and application of the prophecies, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will, Heb. ii. 4.

To sum up these remarks. A great variety of distant future events, which no human sagacity could possibly foresee, and which are confined to one certain scheme of things, and ultimately point at one person, have been predicted by different men in different ages; and that with the utmost degree of minuteness, though it appears that they did not fully understand the sense of their

own predictions. That the events predicted have accordingly come to pass about the time foretold, and in which they were expected, each particular having received a proper and circumstantial accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth, and in him alone; to whom they are constantly applied throughout the writings of the New Testament; which application was accompanied and confirmed by a train of the most striking attestations from heaven.

Now, what can we possibly conclude from all these particulars put together, but that it was the omniscient Spirit of God that testified these things before-hand; that as the events predicted were fulfilled in Jesus, and in no other person whatever, he must be the true Messiah, the Son of God, to whom all the prophets gave witness; and that, consequently, the Christian religion, of which he is the author and founder, must be of divine origin and authority. We shall now,

IV. Take notice of some OBJECTIONS.

1. It has been objected, that some of the prophecies are so obscure, that it is not easy to know with certainty to what or to whom they apply.

If we view the prophecies separately, or as detached independent predictions, we shall indeed find a degree of obscurity in many of them; but if we consider them as connected and dependent parts of a vast scheme of prophecy, which commenced with the fall of man, and has been gradually unfolding itself through successive ages; and if we also take into view that this vast scheme has but one common end, *viz.* to bear testimony to Jesus, and the affairs of his kingdom; in this view the darkest prophecy will have some light thrown upon it from the place it holds in the general system, from the

known design of the whole, or from its application and accomplishment, as revealed in the writings of the New Testament.

But there are plain reasons why a certain degree of obscurity should rest upon the prophecies till they are fulfilled. Free agents were to be employed, and to act their part as instruments in fulfilling them; but if they had known every circumstance with the utmost precision before-hand, some might be disposed to hasten, and others to defeat their accomplishment; men's acting would not appear so free, nor God's providence so conspicuous in the completion: therefore, that the moral faculties of the agents might have their free exercise, it was proper that some part of the predicted event should be veiled from them. Thus, though it was prophesied that the Jews were to reject the Messiah and put him to death; yet it is not likely that any of them would have acted such a part had they fully understood that prophecy, or believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Their ignorance of this is expressed in the prayer of Jesus for his murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they KNOW NOT what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. And Peter addressing them says, "And now, brethren, I wot that THROUGH IGNORANCE ye did it, as did also your rulers: but those things which God before hath shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled," Acts iii. 17, 18. To the same purpose Paul says, "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they KNEW HIM NOT, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him," Acts xiii. 27, 28. And again, speaking of the doctrine which he preached, which was but obscurely revealed under the former dispensation, in

comparison of what it is now under the gospel, he says, "Which none of the princes of this world (or age) knew; for had they known it, they WOULD NOT have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. ii. 8.

Again, the character given of the prophecies is that of "a light shining in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19. They were indeed sufficiently luminous to raise a general expectation of the Messiah, and of good things to come under his administration; but it was not designed, nor does it consist with the nature of things, that they should afford all that light and evidence which was to result from a comparison of them with their accomplishment. Peter informs us, that it was revealed to the prophets, "that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now" clearly declared in the gospel, 1 Pet. i. 12. It was not intended that either they or their cotemporaries should fully understand the meaning of their predictions; but they knew that in after ages, when they came to be fulfilled, explained, and applied, these obscurities would be removed.

Further, it must be observed, that the prophets lived under the Mosaic economy, which, though of a worldly typical nature, and far inferior to the spiritual dispensation of the gospel; yet, being of divine institution, was to be duly honoured and respected during its continuance. Now, had the Lord by his prophets stripped the veil entirely from the face of Moses, so that the Israelites might stedfastly look to the end of that which was to be abolished, and clearly perceive the superior glory of the gospel economy, it would have indisposed them towards that state of discipline under the yoke of which they were then held: and, therefore, as one well expresses it, the prophets "of course were so to predict the future economy, as not to disgrace the present.

They were to respect the law, even while they announced the gospel, which was in due time to supersede it." Under these circumstances, we might reasonably expect that the prophecies should be attended with some obscurity, and that the stile of many of them would have a tincture of that economy under which they were delivered.

2. It is further objected, that the apostles apply some prophecies to Christ, and the affairs of his kingdom, which seem to have been accomplished under the former economy, and to have no further reference; such as the promise made to Abraham respecting his seed; to David of a long succession of his descendants on his throne, and a number of prophecies which appear to respect the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and of their settlement and prosperity in their own land.

There was indeed a literal accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham of multiplying his natural seed; but this numerous offspring was not the Seed in whom God promised to bless all nations, Gen. xxii. 18. and which the apostles apply to Christ in Acts iii. 25, 26. Gal. iii. 8, 16. David's descendants succeeded him on the throne only for the space of about four hundred and fifty-four years, and therefore could not be that Seed whose throne was to be established for ever, or as the days of heaven, 2 Sam. vii. 16. Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36, 37. None of them answered to the description which is given of this Son of David, and of his reign, in the succeeding prophecies. See Isa. ix. 6—8. ch. xi. 1—11. Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. ch. xxx. 9. ch. xxxiii. 14—23. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. ch. xxxvii. 24, 25. Hos. iii. 5. Some of these prophecies were delivered very near, and even after, the time in which the descendants of David were

deprived of the government, and therefore were never fulfilled in them; nor were they to be fulfilled till towards the end of Daniel's 70 weeks or 490 years from the giving forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, Dan. ix. 24—27. Accordingly, the Jews were still expecting the accomplishment of these prophecies about the time in which Jesus appeared, and to him they are applied in the writings of the New Testament, (see Luke i. 32, 33, 69, 70. Acts ii. 30, 31. ch. xiii. 23, 32, 33, 34. Rom. i. 2—5. 2 Tim. ii. 8. Rev. xxii. 16.) and cannot possibly be applied to any other. The prophecies respecting the deliverance of the Jews from captivity, with their increase and prosperity in their own land, had in part a literal accomplishment; but many of them evidently refer to a greater deliverance, and more excellent blessings, than ever that people enjoyed as a nation; and there are also many promises intermixed with these which were not accomplished till the Messiah came, such as the promise of making a new covenant, Jer. xxxi. 31—35. compared with Heb. viii. 8—13.—of the effusion of the Spirit, Ezek. xxxix. 29. Joel ii. 28—32. with Acts ii. 16—22.—of a new heart and spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—28. with John iii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 17.

3. But it is said, that the apostles and evangelists sometimes give a very different sense to some of the prophecies from that which appears to be the primary and immediate view of the prophets themselves,

This may be granted without any prejudice to the apostolic interpretation; for there are prophecies which evidently bear a double sense, and were accomplished in more events than one. For understanding this, let it be considered, that between the promise of Christ made to Abraham, and his coming into the world, it

pleased God to separate the people of whom he was to come from all other nations of the world, to take them under his own immediate government as his peculiar people, and to give them his law, which included a variety of peculiar institutions suited to the nature and ends of that singular economy. As the government was strictly theocratical, it was necessary that on all occasions the people should be duly sensible of this: hence prophecy, or immediate communications of the mind of God, became necessary to its administration; and, accordingly, prophets were raised up unto them from time to time, to give them counsel from God in all the important affairs of state, to encourage their trust in him while adhering to his law, to explain the cause of all their disasters, and to give them previous notice of future events, either of mercy or judgment, that in their accomplishment they might have a clear conviction that God had revealed these things, and that they were under his immediate cognizance and government.

But what deserves particular notice here is, that the peculiar law which God gave to that chosen people, was not given for its own sake, but to be subservient and introductory to a more excellent and spiritual institution which was to succeed it. The Jews were kept under the discipline of that law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed; so that it was their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith, Gal. iii. 23, 24. It had a shadow of good things to come; but the body (or substance) was of Christ, Heb. x. 1. Col. ii. 17. The design of the whole Mosaic institution is declared to be "for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after," Heb. iii. 5. and the whole epistle to the Hebrews proceeds upon that principle.

Since therefore the whole frame of the legal dispensation was intended to adumbrate the gospel economy, and to be as it were a kind of continued typical prophecy of it, we need not think it strange, that some of the predictions of the Jewish prophets should bear a double sense, or that the spirit of prophecy should have a respect to both dispensations, which were so intimately connected, and that the latter of these, as being the end of the former, should be the main and ultimate object in view. Upon this principle must the promise made to David, respecting his seed, be explained; for it had a respect to his son Solomon, to whom it is applied, 1 Chron. xxii. 6—11. 2 Chron. vii, 17, 18. but we have already shewn, that the Seed ultimately intended is one infinitely greater than Solomon. Indeed, the inspired writers of the New Testament seldom if ever take notice of the letter of such prophecies as have a double sense, but apply them solely and directly to the Messiah and his kingdom, according to their true spirit and ultimate design.

4. It has been suggested, that the unbelief of the Jews, who, it is supposed, were best qualified to explain their own prophecies, and to judge of their accomplishment, affords a ground of suspicion, that the New Testament sense and application of them is not agreeable to their original intention. In answer to this let it be observed,

1st, That though the bulk of the Jewish nation were not convinced by the argument from prophecy that Jesus was the promised Messiah; yet multitudes of them were. In the apostolic age, there were many (*μυριάδες*) ten thousands or myriads of them in Judea and Jerusalem who believed, Acts xxi. 20. besides a great number from among those Jews who were dispersed among the Gen-

tiles. And it is well known, that prophecy was the chief argument which the apostles used in convincing them, in connection with its accomplishment in the facts which they testified concerning Jesus.

2dly, The unbelieving Jews did not controvert the application of the prophecies to the Messiah, whom they were looking for about the time in which Jesus appeared ; for they themselves applied these prophecies to their expected Messiah, excepting such of them as related to his sufferings. Nor did they object to the apostles for explaining some of the prophecies in a secondary sense, for that is what they were in use to do themselves. But they denied that Jesus was the person promised, or that the prophecies were applicable to him. They entirely overlooked the humble and suffering state of the Messiah in this world, though clearly foretold by their prophets ; and they expected that his kingdom was to be of a worldly nature, and his reign long and prosperous on this earth ; and as they found nothing in Jesus to answer to their carnal and ambitious expectations, they rejected him, as was also foretold. Possessed of such prejudices and erroneous sentiments, they were very ill qualified to give the true sense of the prophecies, which testified beforehand both the sufferings of Christ in this world, and the glory that should follow his sufferings and resurrection from the dead, neither of which were any part of their scheme.

With respect to the later Jews, as they cannot be ignorant that the time for the coming of the Messiah is long ago past, many of them are obliged to admit that he has come at the time appointed, but has hitherto been hid from them on account of their sins. Being pinched with the prophecies which speak as clearly of the sufferings of Christ as of his glory and dominion,

they are driven to the necessity of supposing a twofold Messiah, one they call the Son of Joseph, and the other the Son of David: to the former they apply the sufferings, and to the latter the glory and dominion. This conceit is not only without foundation in their scriptures, but contrary to the former ideas and expectations of that people. Further, they have relinquished the interpretation which they acknowledge their ancient Rabbins have given of several of the prophecies respecting the Messiah, and have invented new explanations, for the avowed purpose of silencing the Christians. As such shifts clearly demonstrate their deep-rooted prejudices and inflexible obstinacy; so they shew that they of all other people are the least qualified to give a fair interpretation of the prophecies, or to judge of their completion. But it must further be observed,

3dly, That the unbelief of the Jews is so far from affording any grounds of suspicion, either with respect to the truth of the prophecies, or the justness of their application to Jesus, that, on the contrary, it serves much to confirm our faith in both; for,

(1.) These prophecies were in the custody of the Jews long before Jesus appeared; and he and his apostles refer them to those prophecies at the very time they were fulfilling; which shews that they were then a part of the Jewish scriptures, and acknowledged to be of divine authority by his enemies. The Jews at this day acknowledge these prophecies to be the inspired writings of their prophets, and, like their ancestors, read them in their synagogues every Sabbath day. There can be no suspicion, therefore, that these predictions were forged in order to give testimony to Jesus.

(2.) Had the Jewish nation unanimously acknowledged their Messiah, a suspicion might have arisen

among the Gentiles, that there was some collusion in the case, and that they had concerted measures to impose upon mankind, and to advance the honour of their nation, by supporting the claims of Jesus to be Lord of all, and the Saviour of the world. But their infidelity cuts off every suspicion of this kind, as well as of any supposed degree of partiality in favour of Jesus.

(3.) The unbelief of the Jews, and their treatment of the Messiah, were clearly and repeatedly foretold by their own prophets, which affords strong evidence both of the inspiration of the prophets, and of Jesus being the person intended. It cannot be denied, that there are several prophecies that the Jews would reject the Messiah when he should appear. It is predicted that Christ, who is represented as a stone, would be refused of the Jewish builders, and become the head stone of the corner, Ps. cxviii. 22. applied Matt. xxi. 42. Acts iv. 11. It is also foretold, that the Messiah “shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin, and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken,” Isa. viii. 14, 15. Compare this with chap. xxviii. 16. Rom. ix. 33. 1 Pet. ii. 8. It is prophesied that few of them should believe the gospel report, and that they were to perceive no beauty in the Messiah that they should desire him, but that he was to be despised and rejected by them, Isa. liii. 1—3. compared with John xii. 38. Rom. x. 16. Their blindness and hardness of heart is foretold, Isa. vi. 9, 10. compared with Matt. xiii. 14, 15. John xii. 40. Nay, it was predicted that they should combine with the Gentiles to put him to death: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set

themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his Messiah," Ps. ii. 1, 2. which is explained of Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, being gathered together against Christ, for to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done, Acts iv. 25—29.

That the Jews should reject and condemn their own Messiah to death, whom they were so earnestly expecting, was a thing very unlikely, and none but the omniscient God could reveal it so long before. That the event hath verified the prediction none will deny, who believe the history of the New Testament; and if any should doubt that, let him ask the Jews at this day, who will not deny the fact, but avow and justify the infidelity of their forefathers and their treatment of Jesus.

If it be said, that their rejecting Jesus does not prove him to be the true Messiah, for they might also reject one who falsely assumed that character: I reply,

Though this is supposable, yet it was not in fact the case. They were ready to fall in with every impostor who flattered their worldly views; and so Christ tells them, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," John v. 43. But the prophecies declare that they should reject the *true* Messiah; for they describe him as the Lord's anointed, whom he should set upon his holy hill of Zion—his Son whom he hath begotten—the foundation stone which God should lay in Zion, and which he should make the head of the corner. This is he who was to be a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the Jews, in whom they were to see no form, comeliness, or beauty, that they should desire him, consequently was to be despised and rejected of them.

Now, to whom will the Jews at this day apply these

prophetic characters? Not surely to any false Christ whom their forefathers rejected; for they do not apply to any such, but are evidently descriptive of the true Messiah. Nor can they apply them to any one whom they are looking for as yet to come, and who shall be acknowledged and honourably received by them; for, if the prophecies are true, come when he will, they will reject him, and see no beauty in him that they should desire him. Besides, the time for his coming has long ago elapsed. Will they produce a number of reasons why Jesus was rejected by their forefathers? Be it so; but were they to have none for rejecting the true Messiah? Was he to be perfectly agreeable to what they desired and expected? If so, how, in that case, could they be supposed to reject him? And if they did not reject the true Messiah, how are the prophecies fulfilled which so clearly foretold it? But as Jesus came at the time, and in the circumstances foretold, as he answers to all the accounts given of the Messiah by the prophets, and to this among the rest, that he was to be rejected and condemned to death by the rulers of his own nation; these things afford the most decisive evidence, that he is the person who was promised to come, and that the Jews in vain look for another.

SERMON IX.

THE SUBJECTION OF ALL NATIONS TO CHRIST.



PSALM xxii. 27, 28.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's ; and he is the Governor among the nations.

THIS Psalm contains a clear prophecy of the sufferings of Christ. The manner and circumstances of his death, the insults and mockery of his enemies, and the very words which he uttered upon the cross, are here particularly foretold, as they are afterwards historically recorded by the Evangelists. Compare ver. 1, 7, 8, 16, 18, with Matt. xxvii. 35, 39, 43, 46. Here we find him, “ offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death :” Nor did he cry in vain ; “ he was heard in that he feared ;” for though he was brought to the dust of death for the offences of his people, yet he was raised again from the dead for their justification, and exalted to the highest glory and honour, as the reward

of his obedience unto death. For this deliverance and reward, he gives thanks unto his God and Father, and calls upon all that fear the Lord to praise and glorify him, ver. 22—25. The joy and satisfaction of believers in the salvation procured by his death is also foretold: “The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your hearts shall live for ever,” ver. 26. See John vi. 51. Then follow the words of the text, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and he is the Governor among the nations.”

The kingdom or supreme government of the whole universe belongs naturally to the Lord, as he is the creator and sustainer of all things; but the kingdom here intended is the Lord’s in a distinguished sense. It is that kingdom which it was foretold the God of heaven should set up, wherein all people, nations, and languages, should serve him, and which, from a small beginning, after long depression, and manifold conflicts, should at last prevail over all opposition, and fill the whole earth, Dan. ii. 35, 44. chap. vii. 14, 27. It is that kingdom which, in the economy of redemption, the Father hath given to his Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things, Ps. ii. 6—8. Matt. xi. 27. Luke xxii. 29. Heb. i. 2. Its foundation is laid in Christ’s death and resurrection, as is clear from the connection both in this and the second Psalm; and it was conferred upon him as the reward of his obedience unto death. See Isa. liii. 10—12. Philip. ii. 8—12. Heb. i. 3—10. chap. ii. 9, 10. So that it is the kingdom not only of the Father, who is Lord of heaven and earth, but also of his Christ. Matt. xi. 25—28. Rev. xi. 15. Taking the words in this sense, they contain,

I. A promise, or prophecy, that all nations shall be brought into subjection to Christ.

II. A reason assigned for this subjection.

III. We shall inquire, whether this promise has as yet been fully accomplished ; and, if not,

IV. Whether it be the duty of Christians at this day to use means for its accomplishment ; and,

V. What encouragement they have to exert themselves in so glorious a cause.

I. Here we have a promise, or prophecy, that all the ends of the world shall be made subject unto Christ, and that his dominion shall extend over the heathen. “ All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations (or families of the heathens) shall worship before thee.” We may notice,

1. The *extensiveness* of this promise ; “ *All* the ends of the earth—*all* the kindreds of the nations.” There are a great many promises to the same purpose, which are expressed in terms equally universal. The great gospel promise made unto Abraham runs thus ; “ In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Gen. xii. 3. Hereby Abraham was made “ the heir of the world.” Rom. iv. 13. not in his own person, but in his Seed, which is Christ, Gal. iii. 16. and so the promise is renewed in these terms, “ In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Gen. xxii. 18. Agreeable to this it is prophesied of the King Messiah, that “ all nations shall serve him ;” that “ men shall be blessed in him ; all nations shall call him blessed ;” Psal. lxxii. 11, 17 ; “ all the ends of the earth shall fear him.” Ps. lxxvii. 7. The Lord hath said, “ I will gather all nations and tongues ; and they shall come and see

my glory,"—"all flesh shall come to worship before me," Isa. lxvi. 18, 23. Ps. lxxv. 2. Jer. iii. 17. It is promised, that under the reign of the Branch from Jesse's root, there shall be universal peace, concord, and safety; and the reason given for it is, "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. xi. 9. Of the Son of man it is said, "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." Dan. vii. 14. And the full accomplishment of this is expressed thus; "The kingdoms of this world are become our Lord's and his Christ's." Rev. xi. 15, These passages declare, in the clearest terms, the universal subjection of the nations to Christ. But,

2. As subjection to Christ may be considered in different views, we may observe, (1.) That his incorrigible enemies are put under him, and will be made subject to him, however unwillingly. He is possessed of universal power over all flesh, and those who will not willingly have him to reign over them, he will rule with a rod of iron, punish them as rebels against his rightful authority, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel, Ps. ii. 9. Dan. ii. 44. Rev. xii. 5. chap. xix. 15. for he must reign in the midst of his enemies, till he hath subjected them under his feet, Ps. cx. 1, 2. 1 Cor. xv. 25.—But, (2.) There is a professed subjection to Christ, when men confess that he is Lord, own his authority, profess to believe his doctrine, and outwardly submit to his laws and institutions. These are subjects of his visible kingdom, who, according to their profession, are termed *saints* and *faithful* in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 1, and so are objects of that mutual love which Christ has enjoined in his new commandment, John xiii. 34—36. Yet among

these there are many whom Christ will at last disown.—
 (3.) There is also a real and sincere subjection to Christ, when men not only outwardly make a scriptural profession of his name, but are inwardly what they profess; who are regenerated by the word and Spirit of God, and whose faith worketh by love, and produceth the genuine fruits of the gospel. These are subjects not only of Christ's visible, but invisible kingdom, and will at last be acknowledged and approved of by him as his good and faithful servants.

Now our text, I apprehend, includes all without distinction who make a scriptural profession of the name of Christ and of subjection to him, and which are frequently characterized as if they were all his true subjects. The words are evidently expressive of the conversion and subjection of a *willing* people unto Christ; for it is said, they shall *remember*, and *turn unto the Lord*—they shall *worship before thee*; which imports their repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and their yielding him religious worship and obedience. This is also clear from the parallel passages already cited, in which it is foretold, that they shall have the *knowledge of the Lord*—shall *see his glory*—*fear him*—*serve him*—*worship before him*—and be *blessed in him*. And though we are not so sanguine as to imagine that *all* the inhabitants of the globe will be truly and savingly converted in the latter days, any more than we think that *all* the professors of Christianity in the apostolic age, who are termed *believers*, *saints*, and *faithful*, were really so converted; yet the passages already cited seem to import, at least, that Christianity shall prevail on the earth, and that the greater part of mankind, in all parts of the habitable world, shall make the scriptural profession of faith in Christ, and of obedience unto

him, and so become subjects of his visible kingdom. We shall now consider,

II. The *reason* assigned for the subjection of all nations to Christ, which is this, "For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the Governor among the nations."

All nations of mankind had revolted from God, their Creator and rightful Sovereign, and yielded themselves up to the usurped dominion of Satan, the god of this world, whom they served in all manner of idolatry, and by every species of impiety and wickedness, Rom. i. 21—32. Eph. ii. 2, 3. and so had become liable to the just vengeance of Almighty God for their rebellion against him, Rom. iii. 19. But God, out of his infinite mercy, sent his only begotten Son into the world, to destroy the kingdom of Satan, redeem men from his power and dominion, reconcile them unto himself, and procure for them the remission of sins and eternal life, John iii. 16. ch. xii. 31. Col. ii. 15. Heb. ii. 14. Rom. v. 8—11. The Son of God having finished the work of redemption by his obedience unto death and triumphant resurrection, the Father, as a reward for his obedience, and that he might the more effectually accomplish all the ends of his undertaking, exalted him to the highest glory and honour, and vested him with universal power and dominion as Lord of all, Philip. ii. 9—12. Acts x. 3. Some texts express this in general terms: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," Matt. xi. 27. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John iii. 35. And upon the expression *all things*, the apostle observes, "For in that he put *all things* in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him," Heb. ii. 8.

So that it must be understood in the largest sense. Other texts mention the extensive bounds of his dominion: he says himself, "All power in HEAVEN and in EARTH is given unto me," Matt. xxviii. 18. In *heaven* his throne is placed at the right-hand of the Majesty on high, Heb. i. 3. All the angels of God are commanded to worship him, and are his ministering servants, Heb. i. 6, 14. The spirits of just men made perfect in heaven are all his subjects, and the purchase of his blood; for he is Lord both of the dead and living, Rom. xiv. 9. On *earth* all nations are included in his right. The Father hath given to his Son begotten from the dead, "the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession," Ps. ii. 8. and those who will not kiss the Son, and be subject to the sceptre of his grace, he will rule with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel, ver. 9. for all nations shall serve him, Ps. lxxii. 11. Dan. vii. 14. Thus we see that, by the Father's grant, the kingdom belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is the Governor among the nations; and this affords many reasons to convince us, that all nations must become subject to him. For,

1. If the kingdom is the Lord's and his Christ's, every thing he has purposed or promised respecting it must infallibly take effect, however impossible it may appear in the eyes of men. He is possessed of *almighty power* to accomplish all his designs; to give success to the word of his grace in turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; to order and dispose all events in subserviency to this end, and to overcome all opposition. And will he not exert his mighty power in advancing his own kingdom, for which he hath done so much already, and in which his

own honour and glory are so much concerned? Surely the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this, Isa. ix. 7. His *faithfulness* is pledged to make good all his promises respecting the universal extent of his kingdom, according to their true sense. Some of these promises we have already cited; and it is not possible they should fail, because it is impossible for God to lie. But we may farther observe, that he hath confirmed all these promises with the most solemn oath. He calls upon *all the ends of the earth* to look unto him and be saved; and their obeying this call is not left to a peradventure; for he adds, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.” And then all Israel shall also be saved: “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,” Isa. xlv. 22—25. compared with Philip. ii. 9—11. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. When therefore the kingdoms of this world actually become our Lord’s and his Christ’s, all the ends of the earth must, professedly at least, turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worship before him.

2. If the Father has given the kingdom to Christ, and appointed him Governor among the nations, as his Son and Heir; if he has given him a right and title to the heathen for an INHERITANCE, and to the uttermost parts of the earth for a POSSESSION, Ps. ii. 8. then assuredly his title will be made good: but it is not made good to the full extent of this grant, till all the ends of the world turn unto the Lord; till then he does not actually inherit all nations as his possession,

Ps. lxxxii. 8. This will be evident if we consider, that as Christ's spiritual and *invisible* kingdom consists only of such subjects as are really of the truth, and hear his voice, John xviii. 36, 37. and who are known only with certainty to the Lord himself, 2 Tim. ii. 19. So his kingdom in this world, as it appears *visible* to men, judging according to the rule of the word, consists only of such subjects as make a scriptural profession of faith in Christ, and of obedience to him as their Lord and King; for in this does the very visibility of his kingdom in this world consist. Whatever means in his providence he may use to crush his incorrigible enemies, who will not have him to reign over them; yet he cannot with propriety be said to inherit all nations, or govern them as their king, unless they acknowledge him as such, and visibly profess their subjection to him. Therefore, if all the ends of the world, and all the kindreds of the nations, are to be visible subjects of this kingdom, they must turn unto the Lord, and worship before him.

3. It is the revealed *design* of God, in conferring the kingdom upon his Son, that all nations should serve and worship him. This is expressly declared, "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom:" for what end? "That all people, nations, and languages should serve him," Dan. vii. 14. The apostle Paul declares the same thing: "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:" and the design was, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Philip. ii. 9—11. It is therefore impossible that the great design of God in Christ's exaltation should be frustrated.

4. That "the kingdom is the Lord's," and that "he is the Governor among the nations," may also be considered as the great *argument* or *motive* which shall induce the nations to turn unto him, and worship before him. The second Psalm, as well as this, contains a prophecy of Christ's sufferings, resurrection, and exaltation to the kingdom, including the grant of the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, with full power to reduce all under him, and to punish all who will not be subject to him; and by this the universal admonition is enforced, "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," Ps. ii. 10—12. But it is evident that this doctrine of the kingdom can have no influence upon the subjection of the nations till they hear it. "For how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. x. 14, 15. Christ is made the Head of the Heathen; but it is at *hearing of him* they shall obey him, and that strangers shall submit themselves unto him, Ps. xviii. 43, 44. Isa. lv. 5. This clearly supposes the universal publication of the gospel of the kingdom among all nations. It is this which they shall remember, or consider with attention, and believe, and in which they shall find every motive and inducement to turn unto the Lord, and worship before him. We shall now enquire,

III. Whether this promise or prophecy has hitherto been fully accomplished.

It is evident that it began to be fulfilled in the days of the apostles. After Christ rose from the dead, and had all power in heaven and in earth given unto him, he commanded his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. Mark xvi. 15. and being by the right hand of God exalted, he shed forth the Spirit upon them, furnishing them with extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers to qualify them for that arduous work, and to gain credit to their doctrine as a revelation from God. They accordingly went forth publishing the gospel of the kingdom every where, both to Jews and Gentiles, and, in little more than thirty years, it came unto all the world, and was preached to every creature under heaven, Col. i. 6, 23. for "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world," Rom. x. 18. This universal publication of the gospel was also attended with extraordinary success. Many thousands of the Jews were converted to the faith of Christ, Acts xxi. 20. and vast numbers of heathens every where turned from idols to serve the living and true God. But all this was not the full accomplishment of the promise in our text. It does not appear, that, during the apostolic age, the gospel was published very far beyond the limits of the Roman empire, which is what is sometimes intended by the expression *all the world*; and it is certain that a great part of the world was then unknown. And though the converts were many, yet they were but few when compared with the bulk of mankind who still remained in infidelity. Paul represents the Jewish converts of his time as only a

remnant in comparison of the body of that nation, Rom. ix. 27. ch. xi. 4, 5. and he speaks of the *fulness* both of Jews and Gentiles as to come in at a future period, according to the prophecies, ver. 12, 25, 26.

Whatever farther progress was made in the promulgation of the gospel, during the first three centuries, yet the promise under consideration was not fully accomplished during that period: for the mystery of iniquity, which began to work even in the days of the apostles, 2 Thess. ii. 7. operated more powerfully, and gradually increased after their death. Many of the Christian teachers began to assume a lordly dominion both over God's heritage, and one another, and were strongly tinctured with covetousness, pride, and ambition. The primitive purity and simplicity of the Christian faith was much corrupted and defaced by the introduction of vain philosophy, superstition, heresies, and divisions, though all this while they had much to endure from successive persecutions.

Under the reigns of the emperor Constantine and his successors, persecution ceased, heathenism was abolished by authority, and Christianity established in its stead, as the religion of the empire. This was the beginning of the alliance between the Christian church and the state: the clergy were advanced to worldly power, honour, and affluence, and all the world seemed to flock to the standard of the cross. But did the prophecy in our text receive its accomplishment in this? Far from it. Those who form their judgment of Christianity from the New Testament, cannot fail to see that this change of affairs had only a tendency to accelerate its corruption, as in fact it did. Propagated by human authority and worldly inducements, and blended with error and superstition, what it gained in territory, num-

bers, and earthly glory, it lost in purity, spirituality, and power. Here also the man of sin was brought forth, and grew apace, till he became ready to be revealed, when he who then hindered should be taken out of the way, 2 Thess. ii. 7.

When the Roman empire was broken in pieces, by the incursions of the barbarous nations, and divided into ten independent kingdoms, these divided parts became subject to the bishop of Rome, as universal head of the church, and lent him their power to support his impious claims and tyrannical authority, till by degrees he gained the ascendancy, and reigned over the kings of the earth. This is that monstrous power which was foretold and described by Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 3—13. and by John in the book of the Revelation. He was to continue 42 months, or 1260 days, Rev. xiii. 5. which, in prophetic language, signifies that number of years; and then the Lord was to consume him with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming, 2 Thess. ii. 8. During the long reign of this antichristian power, and while all the world was wondering after the beast, the promise in our text could not be fulfilled; for while this dreadful evil continued, the outer court of God's house was not measured, but given to the Gentiles, who trod the holy city under foot; God's two witnesses prophesied in sackcloth, and the true church was hid in the wilderness, Rev. xi. 2, 3. ch. xii. 14.

At the time of the Reformation, which began in 1517, and ever since that period, the Lord has been remarkably at work in consuming that antichristian power, both by his word and providence. Several nations have thrown off his yoke, and renounced many of his gross abominations; but, alas! it is too evident,

that the greater part of those who have separated from that corrupt communion have not turned to the Lord. Some have turned from superstition to embrace avowed infidelity, and many more have taken up a mere form of godliness without the power of it. The crown and mitre have formed a political alliance in Protestant as well as in Popish nations; and though a decided preference is due to the professed creed of the reformed, yet it is by far the smallest number of them who have adopted primitive apostolic Christianity, as the standard of their reformation.

A great many parts of the world, formerly unknown, have been discovered in later ages; but the spread of the gospel has not been proportioned to those discoveries. Matters of a very different, and, in some instances, of a very opposite nature, have in general occupied men's attention and engaged their pursuit. In North America, indeed, the gospel has been making considerable progress; but there are other parts of the world, particularly in Asia and Africa, where the Redeemer had once planted his standard, which are now either overspread by the delusions of Mohammed, or have reverted back to gross Paganism. Computations have been made of the proportion which all the professors of Christianity at this day bear to the rest of the inhabitants of the globe; some make them to be a sixth, and others only a seventh part of mankind. What a vast disproportion is here! And if from these we were to deduct the innumerable multitudes of mere nominal professors and baptized infidels, the disproportion would be vastly greater.

Does this view of matters come up to the words of our text? Can it with any propriety be said, that all the ends of the world have remembered and turned unto the

Lord, and that all the kindreds of the nations worship before him, when it is a well known fact, that many nations at this present day actually reject Christ, and many more have not so much as heard of him? It is therefore clear to a demonstration, that this promise has never yet been fully accomplished. We shall now enquire,

IV. Whether it be a duty incumbent upon Christians at this day to use means for its accomplishment.

It is certain that Christ hath appointed means for the advancement of his kingdom in the world; that he hath commanded these means to be used, and that he hath qualified men with various gifts for that purpose.

1. The chief means he hath appointed is the universal publication of the gospel. He commanded his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Mark xvi. 15. Matt. xxviii. 19. This commission, though at first delivered to the apostles, was not confined to them, nor was it exhausted in their personal ministry; for this would have restricted the preaching of the gospel to one age, whereas it was intended as the means of propagating Christ's kingdom to the end of the world. Many others besides the apostles acted under this commission at the first spread of the gospel, and it is prophesied that, long after that period, the everlasting gospel shall be preached "unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," Rev. xiv. 6. There is no part of that commission which men of ordinary gifts, acquainted with the gospel, cannot now execute. They can publish the doctrine which the apostles have already delivered and

left in their writings; they can show the evidence by which it was at first confirmed, and they can baptize disciples, and teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded. Christ's promise, "Lo I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world*," cannot be restricted to the apostles, for their personal ministry was not to continue *to the end of the world*: it must therefore extend to all such as are faithfully engaged in executing this commission to the latest posterity. These considerations clearly show, that the commission to preach the gospel to every creature is still binding, and that it is an incumbent duty upon Christians at this day to concur, according to their respective spheres, opportunities, and abilities, in promoting such a glorious and important work.

It may be objected, that this commission respects only teachers, who are regularly qualified for, and called to that work. It is admitted, that missionaries, who are to be sent to distant parts, ought to be well qualified for that service; yet even in that case, plain intelligent Christians, who are zealous for Christ, and lovers of the souls of their fellow men, may be as useful in conveying the simple gospel to the heathen as those who are trained up to the ministry; not to mention what good might be done by persons of this description among their unconverted neighbours and acquaintance at home, were they to take every prudent method of recommending the gospel to their attention. But not to insist upon this, let it be observed,

2. That another means, subservient to the propagation of the gospel among the heathen, is contributing to the support of those who are immediately engaged in that work. Sending out missionaries must be attended with much expence, at least in the first instance, and without

this there is little rational prospect that such a weighty undertaking can be carried on to any great extent. Here then every one has an opportunity of lending his assistance according to his ability; and surely all who wish the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, and approve of the use of means for its enlargement, must consider it not only as their duty, but their honour and privilege, to contribute to the furtherance of such a cause. The apostle Paul highly commends the Philippians for the supply they had sent him when he was employed in the same work, and calls it "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God," and fruit that would abound to their account, Philip. iv. 14—19. Such as contribute to the support of those who go forth to preach the gospel, are considered by the apostle John as "fellow-helpers to the truth," 3 John ver. 7, 8.

3. Another appointed means for the success of such undertakings is fervent prayer unto God, We ought to be deeply sensible that no human abilities or exertions can avail in this matter without the divine blessing. The success of the gospel at first is always ascribed unto God, and not to the instruments employed in preaching it, though they were divinely qualified for that work. Paul planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. This consideration suggests both the duty and necessity of prayer in the present case. When the Lord is about to accomplish his gracious designs and promises, he will be enquired of for these things, and he usually performs them in answer to the prayers of his people. With regard to the coming and universal prevalence of the kingdom of God in the world, our Lord hath taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Matt. vi. 10. And because the harvest is truly plentiful, but the labourers are few, he commands us to “ pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth labourers into his harvest,” Matt. ix. 37, 38. We are also to pray for those who are sent forth to labour in this important work, that a great door and effectual may be opened unto them; that a door of utterance may be given them to speak the mystery of Christ, that they may make it manifest as they ought to speak; that they may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; and that their labours may be crowned with success, and the word of the Lord have free course, and be glorified. Such were the prayers which the apostle Paul requests in behalf of himself and his fellow-labourers in this work, Eph. vi. 19—21. Col. iv. 3, 4. 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2. Many Christians cannot contribute much to missionary funds; but they can all unite in their fervent prayers to God, who alone can give success to the word of his grace, and who, in building up Zion, will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer, Ps. cii. 16. 17.

Since therefore Christ's command to preach the gospel to every creature is still binding, and since it is in the power of all Christians, in one way or another, to concur in promoting this benevolent and glorious design, and so to be fellow-helpers with the truth, it must undoubtedly be their indispensable duty. If it be their duty to love Christ's cause, to wish the prosperity and enlargement of his kingdom in the world, to have any concern for the salvation of millions of their fellow creatures, who are without God and without hope, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death; it must also be their duty to concur in the means for attaining these ends. It remains to be considered,

V. What encouragement Christians have to exert themselves in such a glorious cause.

When we take into view the extent of the commission to preach the gospel to every creature; the hardships and dangers that must be encountered in executing it; the universal corruption and depravity of mankind; their gross ignorance of divine things; their inveterate prejudices, vicious habits, and malignant passions; and on the other hand, consider how weak and ineffectual all human efforts are to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; such considerations would effectually discourage every attempt of this kind as vain and fruitless, were it not for the encouragements held forth in the word of God.

There are indeed some who deny that there is any ground from the scriptures to expect a more copious accession of the Gentiles into the visible kingdom of Christ, or a more remarkable conversion of the Jews than what has already taken place; and who maintain, that the kingdom of Christ, so far from ever prospering in this world, will be in its lowest state at the second personal coming of Christ to raise his people literally from the grave; and that then they shall reign with him a thousand years upon the earth. But, without entering upon a particular refutation of this scheme, which is clogged with insuperable difficulties, and directly clashes with other parts of revelation, I would only observe, that such as embrace these sentiments, as they can have but small hopes of the success of the gospel, cannot be supposed to be very zealous in their exertions for its propagation. But we have already mentioned several prophecies, respecting the extension and advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, which were neither

exhausted in the apostolic age, nor to have their accomplishment delayed till the resurrection of the just; and we might produce many more to the same purpose; so that there is abundant encouragement for Christians to exert themselves with zeal and activity in the use of all appointed means for promoting the cause of Christ in the world. Let it be considered,

1. That the grant which God the Father hath made to his Son, of the heathen for an inheritance, and of the uttermost ends of the earth for a possession, Psal. ii. 8. must undoubtedly be made good to its utmost extent, whatever apparent difficulties lie in the way. All things are possible with God, and his faithfulness is pledged to accomplish this; therefore, the means he hath appointed for this end cannot fail to be at last successful. God made a grant of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, but near five hundred years elapsed before they got possession of it, during which time they underwent much affliction in Egypt and in the wilderness, and had many misgivings of heart respecting the accomplishment of the promise; yet so punctually was it fulfilled at last, that Joshua thus appeals to them, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God hath spoken concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Josh. xxiii.

14. Did he make good the grant of the inheritance to Abraham's sinful natural seed, by putting them into the possession of it? And is it possible that he will stop short of accomplishing all that he hath promised to his beloved Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and who is that notable Seed of Abraham in whom he hath promised to bless all nations? Surely not. The many promises he hath made of the increase of Christ's

government, the peace and prosperity of his reign, and the extension of his dominion over the whole world, will in due time be certainly realized in their true sense. Such as really believe these promises, and do not consider them as extravagantly hyperbolic, must be greatly encouraged by them to use all proper means for their accomplishment. Consider,

2. That Christ is already in possession of all power in heaven and in earth, Matt. xxviii. 18. and all things are delivered into his hand, Matt. xi. 27. John iii. 35. He has the management and disposal of every thing in nature, providence, and grace, and will undoubtedly make all issue in the prosperity and extension of his own kingdom. His power to subdue the heathen to himself has been already displayed in the rapid progress and wonderful success of the gospel at the beginning, when he sent the rod of his strength out of Zion, and made his word, published by weak and despised instruments, to triumph over all opposition. This shows what he *can*, and is a glorious earnest of what he *will* do, when he shall take unto him his great power and reign, and shall inherit all nations : and it affords great encouragement in the use of those means he hath appointed for extending his kingdom, since he will undoubtedly make them successful in the issue.

True, indeed, many dark and distressing events have taken place from the first publication of the gospel to this present time ; but these are no reasonable grounds of discouragement : on the contrary, when viewed in a proper light, they serve to confirm our faith, and enliven our hopes. Christ forewarned his disciples of many disagreeable events, and particularly what they themselves were to suffer in his cause : and his end in doing so was, that they might not be discouraged or disconcerted when

these things should happen, but have their faith in him who had foretold them confirmed, John xiii. 19, chap. xiv. 29, chap. xvi. 4. In like manner, the great outlines of all the dark and distressing events which have befallen the church unto this day, have been foretold in a wonderful series of prophecies. It was foretold that Christians were to be persecuted by Jews and heathens—That Christianity was to be corrupted by false teachers—That the man of sin was to be revealed sitting in the temple of God, and reigning over the kings of the earth—That his reign was to be marked with deceit, idolatry, blasphemy, tyranny, and cruelty—That it was to continue 1260 years; during which time, the holy city was to be trodden under foot of the Gentiles; the true church was to retire into the wilderness, and the two witnesses to prophesy in sackcloth. Christ's measures of government were not disconcerted by these events. He had them all in his view before hand, and revealed them in opening the sealed book. The subsequent history of the church shows their accomplishment; and now that they have come to pass as he foretold, they serve as so many demonstrative proofs of his divine prescience and veracity; and, consequently, that all the glorious things which succeed them in the scheme of prophecy shall as certainly be fulfilled in their time. These calamitous events have been permitted for wise ends, and Christ's power has been manifested in supporting his people under them, as well as in breaking in pieces the powers which have successively oppressed them; and it shall still be more conspicuously displayed, when he shall take unto him his great power and reign, and shall destroy them who corrupt the earth. Rev. xi. 15—19. chap. xix. 11—21.

3. Another encouragement to propagate the gospel

among the nations arises from the advanced time or period in which we live, and its attendant signs. The publication of the gospel has indeed been always a duty, and could never be unseasonable at any period of the church; but if we attend to the scripture prophecies, and to the historical facts in which many of them have already received their accomplishment, we must be convinced, that it was not the design of God that the gospel should be alike diffused and successful in every period. During the long reign of the man of sin, the two witnesses were to prophecy in sackcloth; nay, they were at last to be overcome and killed, and their dead bodies were to be exposed in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, while they that dwell on the earth were to rejoice over them and make merry, Rev. xi. 3—11. But now that time is past, and a brighter prospect opens to our view. The man of sin received a mortal blow at the Reformation, when the witnesses revived, and were exalted above his power, ver. 11, 12. Since that time the Lord has been consuming him with the spirit of his mouth, as was foretold, 2 Thess. ii. 8. and do we not at this day see him reduced to a mere shadow? It is revealed, that, during the time of his consumption, and before the utter destruction of mystical Babylon, the everlasting gospel shall be preached “to them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,” Rev. xiv. 6. This has been fulfilling in part since the resurrection of the witnesses, particularly in the Protestant nations of Europe, in America, and some other parts; but all that has hitherto been done in this way comes far short of the extent of this prophecy. How many nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, are there in the world, who have never yet

heard the everlasting gospel? But as the period referred to in this prophecy has commenced a considerable time ago, and as we have every reason to think that the time is at hand when it shall receive a more ample accomplishment, ought not this to encourage Christians to bestir themselves, and to unite with heart and hand in diffusing the light of the glorious gospel over the benighted regions of the world where it has hitherto been unknown? The time for this which God hath set, and pointed out in prophecy, appears not very far off; at least, we cannot now reckon upon any intervening event that may be supposed to put it at a great distance. The dispensations of providence, and the present state of the world, seem favourable to it in many respects, and the communication which is now opened with almost all parts of the habitable globe has paved the way for its spread and progress. We are not to expect that the gospel is to be propagated among all nations in a miraculous way, or literally by an angel flying in the midst of heaven, though that may point out its rapid progress and success. The instruments employed in it must be the people of God, as they were in its first publication. Neither are we to wait for some extraordinary and immediate call to this undertaking, as if we expected some new revelation. The commission given by Christ at the beginning is still in force, and extends to all ages. Is there any thing now wanting unless it be a heart for the work? And can any Christian plead that excuse in his own case without self-condemnation and blushing? Do not we daily pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven?" And shall we now make it manifest that we have neither heart nor meaning in such petitions? It cannot be. God will accomplish what he hath foretold,

and he will unite both the hearts and hands of his people in this work.

4. We shall only take notice of another encouragement to preach the gospel among the heathen nations, and that is the promise which Christ hath made to those who are engaged in that work: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. This promise includes in it every encouragement that possibly can be desired: and though it was made in the first instance to his apostles and their assistants, and was remarkably accomplished to them in the first publication and success of the gospel; yet it is not restricted to them, as has already been observed, and as the words clearly show: it extends to all those who shall be engaged in publishing the primitive apostolic gospel and in teaching the disciples to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded, *even unto the end of the world.* And can we possibly doubt his fulfilling this promise at the period when the everlasting gospel is to be published more extensively than ever to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, and which is to issue in the universal spread of the knowledge of the Lord over the whole earth, as the waters cover the sea? Surely not. This encouraging promise imports, that he will be with them by his providence to remove impediments, and set an open door before them, and to defend and protect them in his service—That he will be with them by his Spirit to give them light, counsel, direction and assistance in that work;—to enlarge their hearts, to excite their zeal, and to give them fortitude and utterance—to support, comfort and strengthen them under all the trials and difficulties which they may have to encounter;—and to crown their labours with success and effect. If Christ be with them, no work he calls

them to perform can be too hard for them; no opposition can be successful against them. What greater encouragement can be desired? is not this sufficient to animate every real lover of Christ's kingdom, to concur in the use of all proper means for advancing it, since they may be fully assured that it shall finally prevail and fill the whole earth. "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him! all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

SERMON X.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST NOT OF THIS WORLD.

JOHN xviii. 36, 37.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am, a king." To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Every one that is of the Truth heareth my voice.

THERE is no subject of greater importance, or which serves more universally to regulate all our religious sentiments than the scripture account of *the nature of Christ's kingdom*, as it stands distinguished both from the Jewish theocracy and the kingdoms of this world.

To mistake on this subject was the rock upon which the nation of the Jews split, and the same fatal error has given rise to the corruption of Christianity; to the kingdom of the clergy which the scriptures term

ANTICHRIST, and to the reformed political religion of states. But the source of these mistakes, after so clear a revelation must be traced to the carnality and depravity of the human heart: and the best way to rectify our views of Christ's kingdom, is to have recourse to his own account of it, and to the subsequent illustrations of it, which we have in the doctrine and practice of his first approved followers.

The words of the text contain Christ's good confession respecting this subject—the nature of his kingdom, witnessed before Pontius Pilate, on a memorable occasion. And in this confession he distinguishes it, both from the Jewish theocracy, and the kingdoms of this world, in such a manner as to shew the Roman governor that it never could interfere with the government of the Roman emperor, which it most certainly would have done, had it been a kingdom of this world. The Jews had accused him of having said, “that he himself was CHRIST a king,” Luke xxiii. 2. Such was the accusation they had preferred against him: and though Pilate well knew that the rulers of the Jewish church were themselves rebelliously inclined, and that it was not from a spirit of loyalty, but *from envy* that they delivered him up, yet his duty to Cæsar obliged him to listen to their accusation; for, had he declined it, the Jews might have preferred a charge against him of conniving at rebellion: and therefore he examines Jesus on that head. The words of our text contain his answer. He acknowledges his *regal* character; but then he shows at large, that his kingdom which was the great subject of ancient prophecy, is not a worldly, but a *spiritual* kingdom, and consequently is properly denominated the kingdom of God, or of heaven. When Jesus began to

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describe his kingdom as founded upon TRUTH, Pilate's patience forsook him ; yet he was so far satisfied with the answer he received as to be convinced that the Roman government had nothing to fear from such a king, and therefore he sought to release Jesus. In order to illustrate the subject, I shall

I. Consider the description here given of Christ's kingdom.

II. Deduce a few scriptural inferences from the doctrine. And,

III. Attempt a short improvement of the subject.

I. The Lord Jesus gives a general description of his kingdom in a *negative* way. "My kingdom," says he, "*is not of this world,*" which must certainly imply that it is *not of a worldly origin*. "Now is my kingdom not from hence." Though the providence of God is concerned in worldly kingdoms, and their kings are his ministers for good to his creatures, whom he enjoins to be subject to them in every thing that is lawful; yet worldly kingdoms commonly originate in the wicked passions of their founders, such as in ambition, avarice, pride, and the lust of power and dominion. But the kingdom of Christ did not take its rise from any thing of this kind: neither did it take its rise from the public mind, or the social compact, as our politicians often term it. The origin of Christ's kingdom was just the reverse of all this. It took its rise from the amazing grace, the love and condescension of God towards his guilty creatures; and it is founded on the astonishing condescension, the self-denial, the humility, and abasement of its Sovereign, who humbled himself even to the

accursed death of the cross, Philip. ii. 8, 9. Heb. v. 8, 9. What a contrast is here from the origin of earthly kingdoms. Where shall we find any thing resembling this in the kingdoms of this world? A kingdom established on the sufferings and death of its founder, cannot be a kingdom of this world. But, as Christ's kingdom is not of a worldly origin, so

2. *Neither is it of a worldly nature.* The kingdoms of this world must of necessity be of a worldly nature: they respect earthly things; their government extends only to the bodies and the temporal concerns of their subjects; and their administration is carried on by outward power. But the nature of Christ's kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. It respects men's eternal interests, and its power and influence are exerted over the mind and heart. It consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; and it has not this world for its main *object and end*. The end of worldly kingdoms is at best but the temporal good of earthly communities; they have no higher end to attain, and all state religions are made subservient to this. But the kingdom of Christ has a superior end in view, namely, the eternal happiness of men in the life to come; and so *its laws* run counter to the maxims and spirit of worldly kingdoms. It enjoins disconformity to the world in all its favourite lusts, such as the love of pleasure, riches, and honours. It requires mortification, self-denial, meekness, patience, forgiveness of injuries, humility, love, &c. This forms a striking contrast to all earthly kingdoms, and shews that this world is not its object. It shews also that the *laws and institutions* of this kingdom are not of this world, but of heavenly origin. The laws of earthly kingdoms have a respect merely to men's external conduct in relation to civil society;

their sole object is to maintain good order, peace, and security to their subjects, in a consistency with the gratification of their sensual appetites in a decent way. But the laws of the kingdom of heaven, though they are friendly to civil society, and discountenance all turbulence and disorder, yet worldly happiness is not their object; they regulate the outward conduct, it is true, but they chiefly regard the state of the heart in relation to God: their object is conformity to Christ, and the enjoyment of the divine favour. Hence they run counter to the spirit and course of this world, and contain a complete system of nonconformity to it, not merely in the pursuit of riches, honour, and pleasure, but also as regards all the impious and malignant dispositions which are occasioned by disappointment, or interferences in the gratification of them, such as discontent, envy, hatred, wrath, strife, resentment, and so on. The laws of Christ's kingdom enjoin the mortification of all these malignant tempers and dispositions, and inculcate humility, meekness, gentleness, forgiveness of injuries, all of which are enforced by motives drawn from the world to come. Such laws do not suit a nation of this world; indeed no nation could long exist in the present state of society which was regulated solely by such laws; but they are admirably adapted to the disciples of Christ, as strangers and pilgrims in a state of suffering while in the world.

3. Another distinction which our Lord makes betwixt his kingdom and all worldly kingdoms is, that *it does not admit of the use of the sword*, either in defending, propagating, or supporting it. "If my kingdom were of this world," says Jesus, "then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." He had, a little before this, discharged the use of the

sword when drawn in his defence, ver. 11. and here he tells Pilate, that, such was the nature of his kingdom, it did not admit of that kind of defence. Nor was the sword afterwards used either offensively or defensively in his cause, till Christianity was essentially corrupted and incorporated with the state. Wordly kingdoms not only use the sword for the *punishment* of evil doers, and for *defence* against their enemies, which is indeed necessary to their very existence as kingdoms; but they oftentimes use it *offensively* from motives of avarice and ambition. But “the Son of man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Pilate might learn from this description, what a striking contrast there was betwixt Christ’s kingdom, in which his subjects learned war no more, and that of the Roman emperors, which had so often deluged the world with human blood. Even the kingdom of God among the Jews was erected by means of the sword; but the very nature of Christ’s kingdom prohibits the use of such weapons in its erection or defence. It was set up by means of the down-pouring of the Holy Spirit, thus endowing men with power from on high to “bear witness unto the truth;” by this means the minds of men were enlightened, convinced, humbled, subdued, and reconciled to God. This was the rod of his strength sent out of Zion; and we may see from Acts ii. &c. the amazing success which attended it. Worldly kingdoms are also *defended* and *enlarged* by means of the sword, or by worldly power and policy; but Christ’s kingdom admits of no such defence: such weapons used in his cause may make national professors and hypocrites, but they never can convince the mind or change the heart. It is the word and Spirit of God alone which can produce this effect; nor does it require the wisdom, power,

or policy of man to give the word success. See 1 Cor. i. 18—29. and ch. iii. 5—7.

4. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in respect of *its privileges, immunities, and honours*. Riches, protection, and worldly glory are all that earthly kings can confer upon their favourites; and, much as these things are sought after, they are merely momentary enjoyments, suited only to gratify worldly lusts—the lower and baser passions of our nature; but they can add nothing to the real and lasting happiness of the soul. But Christ has promised none of these things to his subjects; on the contrary, he forewarns them of persecution, poverty, and contempt in the world. They are to be hated of all nations for his sake; and are predestinated to be conformed to himself in his state of humiliation and suffering. The blessings which he confers are all of a spiritual and heavenly nature; they are such as are suited to the feelings of an awakened conscience—the state of an enlightened mind—and the desires of a renewed heart. Such, for instance, as pardon of sin, peace with God, the enjoyment of his favour, participation of his holiness, the riches, honours, protection, and privileges of the sons and heirs of God, and the promise of the everlasting heavenly inheritance, when the days of their pilgrimage are ended. See Eph. i. throughout.

5. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in respect of *its subjects*.

It must appear very evident from what has already been said, that worldly men *as such*, cannot be the real subjects of Christ's kingdom; they can neither relish its privileges nor be subject to its laws. True, indeed, men may assume the appearance of his subjects, and impose upon their fellow-creatures, but Christ has

declared that he will detect and disown them ! And as to his true subjects, he says, “ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you,” John xv. 19. On another occasion, addressing his heavenly Father, he says, “ they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,” ch. xvii. 14, 16. In our text he describes them thus : “ Every one that is *of the truth* heareth my voice.” That which is emphatically called “ THE TRUTH,” is the testimony of God concerning his Son, and the way of salvation through him—so that it is the same thing with “ the faith” or “ the gospel.” To be *of this truth* is to believe and love it. Such are said to be begotten of God with the word of truth, James i. 18. to be born again by the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23. Thus they are “ of the truth,” or of faith. In consequence of this, they hear Christ’s voice—in other words, they give earnest heed to his doctrine, precepts, promises, and admonitions, yielding unreserved obedience to him as their Saviour and their King.

Our Lord gives a most remarkable description of his true subjects, in answer to the question, “ Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?” Were we to form our judgment concerning this matter, according to the maxims that govern the kingdoms of this world, we should have expected the reply to have been—“ he who is of the noblest family, who has the greatest abundance of riches, and the most powerful connections ; or he who has the greatest merit, the most splendid talents, the most commanding eloquence, the most consummate political abilities, and who at the same time has spirit enough to know his worth, and address to urge his

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claims ! But how surprized must the disciples have been at finding their divine Master *reversing* all their ideas on this subject by calling a little child and setting him in the midst of them and saying, “ Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. xviii. 1—4. See also Mark x. 14, 15. Were we to trace out this idea in all its bearings, what a contrast would it present us with between Christ’s subjects and the world ! But to do this properly would require a discourse by itself ; and enough has been said to shew, that Christ’s kingdom stands in direct opposition to the kingdoms of this world, in its origin, its nature, its laws and institutions, its privileges, immunities, and honours, as well as in the character of its subjects. It is a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and in this world it is a kingdom of patience, humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world ; of love and holiness, and sufferings like its king. And it is a kingdom of everlasting and complete happiness when all the kingdoms of this world shall come to an end. Let us now,

II. Consider what inferences we are authorized to deduce from this doctrine. And on this I remark,

1. That if Christ’s kingdom is *not of this world*, then it cannot be established and incorporated with the constitution of worldly kingdoms : for this would subject it to worldly influence, power, and authority ; things that are inconsistent with its very nature. Attempts of this kind have been made in every age, since the days of Constantine the Great : but what has been the result ? What indeed but the corruption of this heavenly institution, in doctrine, discipline, and worship. By these means the kingdom of Christ is made commensurate to an earthly

nation, contrary to the description which he himself gives us of his subjects ; and thus setting aside that separation from the world to which he calls them in his word, 2 Cor. vi. 14—18, &c. “ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers : for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? And what concord hath Christ with Belial ? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols ? for ye are the temple of the living God ; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people : Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

2. If the kingdom of Christ does not allow the use of the sword in its defence and government, then all who use it for that purpose are opposing that kingdom, and throwing down the distinction which ought ever to be preserved between *it* and the kingdoms of this world. The sword cannot *convert* men to the faith, nor can it *defend* them in it, nor *govern* their hearts by it. All this belongs to THE TRUTH, working effectually in bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And here we might notice the practice of rulers and others, having recourse to the civil magistrate to prosecute the writing and publishing of opinions which happen to be contrary to the established religion of the country. The kingdom of Christ disowns all such weapons of defence as this. It authorises no weapons in its defence but the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Its language is, “ In *meekness, instructing* those that

oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." The advocates of state prosecutions seem to forget or at least to overlook the fact, that upon *their* principle the Jewish sanhedrim, and the Roman government too, were justified in proscribing Christianity, and in persecuting both our Lord and his apostles; and had they lived in their days they would have taken part with them, for they certainly inculcated a doctrine which struck at the root of all their established religions, both Jewish and Pagan, or in the emphatic language of their enemies, a doctrine which tended to "turn the world upside down." Upon the same principle may the Hindoos and Hottentots persecute our Christian Missionaries, whose efforts are invariably directed to subvert the systems of superstition established by law in their respective countries.

3. If Christ's kingdom be not of this world, then it neither does nor can interfere with Cæsar's government. It leads to no competition or contention with "the powers that be," about worldly influence or privileges; but it enjoins dutiful subjection to them, and commands its friends rather to suffer than to sin, on the one hand, or resist them by force on the other. This is the established law of Christ's kingdom: hence we find his ambassadors thus declaring his will, Rom. xiii. 1—7. 1 Pet. ii. 19. Titus iii. 1. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the

power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief suffering wrongfully." "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates," &c. And this spirit we see exemplified by the Saviour himself, as well as by his apostles, in all their deportment.

4. If Christ's kingdom is not of this world, then it neither stands nor falls with the kingdoms of this world. It rose at first *independent* of them all; yea, *in opposition* to them all; for all their power and influence were exerted to crush it. But it surmounted their worst usage; it triumphed over the formidable persecutions that antichrist waged against it; it overcame by faith and patience; and it will finally triumph when all rule and authority are put down, Acts ii. 24—28. Rev. xi. 15. Dan. ii. 44. ch. vii. 14.

5. If Christ's subjects are only those that are *of the Truth*, that is, such as understand it, and believe it, and obey it, and who find all their salvation in it—what shall we think of national churches, in which persons are said to be made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of eternal life, merely, because they

have been born in what is called a Christian country, and have had a certain initiatory rite performed on them without their knowledge or consent, in the days of unconscious infancy. We must say that the societies formed upon this plan may be very respectable in a worldly point of view, but they are not the kingdom of Christ; they are worldly societies, not gathered by the influence of the Truth, nor are they subject to the authority of Christ, as the King and head of his church; and though there may be among them many of Christ's disciples, his voice is now calling on them, to "come out from among them," and separate themselves to the law of the Lord, 2 Cor. vi. 17. Rev. xviii. 4.

6. Once more: if this be a scriptural account of the nature of Christ's kingdom; then, allow me to ask, *what appearance* must such a kingdom now make in the world? It is manifest that its subjects cannot be conformed to this world, for they are not *of* the world, even as Christ himself was not of the world. They must be despised by the world, perhaps laughed at for their singularity; and if they are conscientiously following Christ; if they are walking in his steps, and bearing an honest testimony against the world *as evil*, they must be content to bear its hatred. Of this Christ himself forewarned them in the days of his flesh, when he said, "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." But there is this for their consolation, that if they suffer with him, they shall also reign; if they are conformable to him in his death, planted in the likeness of it, they shall be also in that of his resurrection. For the suffering of death, he is now crowned with glory and honour, and those who take up the cross and follow him here, shall in due time partake of his glory. I shall now conclude,

III. With attempting a short improvement of the subject: and with a view to this we shall endeavour to apply it to two distinct classes of persons; first, to such as are the professed subjects of Christ's kingdom; and then to such as reject his authority, rebel against his government, and cast his laws behind their backs, whose language is, we will not have this man to reign over us.

1. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King," Ps. cxlix. 2. What are all the monarchs of this world when compared with him? In his character and person and work, all that is excellent and glorious centers. He is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings; the blessed and the only Potentate, who alone hath immortality; to whom belong honour and power everlasting. He is the true Melchisedec; the King of Righteousness and King of Peace—at once the Son and the Lord of David. He is the Mighty God—the Sovereign of angels as well as men, to whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. He hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and he turneth them as the rivers of water. His kingdom, indeed, is not of this world, but it is "set up in the world by the God of heaven, and it shall never be destroyed; it shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms of this world, and it shall stand for ever." Dan. ii. 44. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isa. ix. 7. How consoling is it to reflect, that, amidst all the revolutions of empires and states; amidst the corruptions which antichrist hath introduced, and notwithstanding the wide spreading desolations of Pagan superstition

and Mahommedan delusions—THE LORD REIGNETH. His throne is established in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. We have seen the floods of persecution lifting up their voice against the kingdom of Christ; the floods have lifted up their waves, but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea. To the eye of sense this kingdom has often been in danger of a total overthrow from the rage of men and the malice of devils; but “the bruised reed shall not be broken, nor the smoking flax quenched: in due time he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” Zion’s King shall neither fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law,” Isa. xlii. 1—4. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will break in pieces all that opposes its progress in the world, until they become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, while itself shall become a great mountain and fill the whole earth, Dan. ii. 34, 35. Let it be our continual prayer, “Thy kingdom come.” Let us not indulge in gloomy apprehensions or desponding fears, since we know, assuredly, that the time is at hand when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

2. If Christ the Lord be a sovereign, and have a kingdom set up in this world; if all authority and power be committed into his hands, both in heaven and earth, then he is surely entitled to the *confidence* and to the *obedience* of his subjects.

That he claims their confidence, is manifest from the numerous calls, commands, and injunctions with which the scriptures abound; not only to submit to his authority but to rely implicitly on his wisdom, and confide in his love and his care. Even the kings and judges of the

earth are called upon to do this : “ Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings : be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling : Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Ps. ii. 10—12.

The confidence which the subjects of Christ are called to repose in him as their King, may be taken under two distinct views, namely, such as relates to the blessings of divine grace, or the salvation of their souls ; and secondly, his providential care of them while absent from him, in their state of pilgrimage in this world ; and in both these respects he is fully entitled to their most implicit trust and reliance.

Confidence in Christ for the blessings of salvation implies a full persuasion of the all-sufficiency of his work to justify the ungodly believing in it—to procure the favour of God, and all that is necessary to their pardon and acceptance. Any doubt or distrust of the perfection of his atonement, the sufficiency of his sacrifice, and of the divine good pleasure resting in it, is at once dishonouring to him, derogatory to his glory, and injurious to our own peace and satisfaction. His subjects should meditate day and night on the divine dignity of his character and person as the Son of God—the Word made flesh—God over all, and blessed for ever. They should reflect on what he has done to save sinners—how he voluntarily became their substitute or representative, bearing their sins in his own body on the tree—how he laid down his life as the ransom price of their redemption—drank the cup of the divine indignation against sin, even to the very dregs, expiring under the wrath of God ! But then the God of peace brought him again from the dead through the blood of

the everlasting covenant, and thereby manifested his highest approbation and most entire satisfaction in his finished work, as having fully expiated sin, removed the curse, and glorified all his perfections ; and now for the sufferings of death he hath crowned Him with immortal honour and glory at his own right hand in the heavens, where he has all power and authority committed into his hands both in heaven and on earth, that he might confer eternal life on all who believe in him. Consider these things, and say, shall we dishonour him by distrusting his ability to save, even to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him? Call to remembrance his own words, “ I am the good Shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep. I give unto them eternal life, and they shall *never perish*, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,” John x. 17, 28. Well might the apostle say, when about to finish his course, “ I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,” 2 Tim. i. 9—12. This was conduct worthy of a subject towards his Almighty sovereign Lord and King, and it calls for our imitation.

And as to the life that now is, Christ calls his subjects to be without carefulness or undue solicitude ; for He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things, Rom. viii. 32—39. Be careful for nothing, therefore, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Call to mind his own instructions to his disciples : “ Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet

for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," Matt. vi. 25—33. But,

3. Let the subjects of Christ's kingdom be reminded, that they are not their own, that he has bought them with his blood; and that, as they are his by purchase, he has a paramount claim upon them for *their obedience*. He has delivered them out of the hands of their enemies that they might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their life: he has given them *laws* for the regulation of their conduct, and he has made their obedience the test of their love to him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Suffer, then,

the word of exhortation: ye who through grace have believed, and are looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life—who have publicly professed allegiance to him as the one Lawgiver, the King of Zion, the head of his body the church, be not ye the servants of men, for ye are bought with a price. Shew your gratitude for redeeming love by a cheerful, conscientious, and unreserved obedience to all your Lord's commands: have continual recourse to the law and to the testimony to learn what is his good and acceptable and perfect will in all things: count nothing of small importance that is stamped with his authority, and beware of the doctrines and commandments of men. As obedient subjects, cheerfully do your Lord's will: take up the cross daily and follow him in the path of self-denial and disconformity to the course of this present evil world; and do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom shine ye as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, Philip. ii. 14, 15.

To conclude: There are many in every age who disown the authority of Christ, disbelieve his doctrine, revile his laws and institutions, and boldly say, we will not have this man to reign over us. Such, however, are the subjects of a kingdom, but it is the kingdom of Satan, the god of this world, the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. This kingdom is indeed very opposite to the kingdom of Christ; the latter is characterized by light as the former is by darkness; the one consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; the other in fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the

mind; in rebelling against God and casting his fear behind their backs. The subjects of one are made free by the knowledge of the truth, and they walk at liberty; of the other, alas! they are the slaves of sin, who, as a mighty despot, tyrannizes over them with resistless sway, and holds them in bondage to their lusts, under the condemning sentence of the divine law. The gospel of the kingdom, however, proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The gracious language of the King of Zion is, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls!” Behold now is the accepted time and day of salvation—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

SERMON XI.

THE CHRISTIAN LAW OF SEPARATION, CONSIDERED
IN CONNECTION WITH THE BELIEVER'S OBLIGA-
TIONS TO HOLINESS, AND ENJOYMENT OF THE
PROMISES.



2 COR. vii. 1.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

THERE is much of the wisdom of God to be traced in the manner by which it hath pleased him to convey instruction to his people in the holy scriptures. The churches gathered by the ministry of the apostles and evangelists, consisted of men of like passions with ourselves; they were the subjects of hearts deceitful and desperately wicked; they were illuminated and sanctified only in part, and had a law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and striving to bring them into captivity to the law of sin, which made them groan for deliverance.

And then, if from the state of individuals, we pass on to that of churches, we find traces of similar imperfection attending them. This was, in a measure, the case with all the apostolic churches, though probably with none of them to such a degree as the church at Corinth. We know from the Acts of the Apostles, ch. xviii. as well as from various things contained in his epistles, that Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, had preached the gospel among them, converted them to the faith of Christ, and planted them in a church state, 1 Cor. xv. 1—4. ch. iv. 15. and iii. 10. No church surpassed them in the number, variety, and extent of their spiritual gifts, ch. i. 7. yet no church mentioned in the apostolic writings seems to have been so deficient in spirituality, in the exercise of fervent brotherly love, or in dutiful submission to him who had redeemed them by his blood. Instead of improving their spiritual privileges to the glory of God, and their own edification in the divine life, the apostle declares he could only address them as babes in Christ, who required to be fed with milk and not with meat, ch. iii. 1, 2. Such was their carnality, their envying, and strife and divisions—their glorying in men, that, however painful to himself such a mode of address, he was obliged to have recourse to the rod of correction.

But though the apostle had personally sustained from some in that church the most unkind and injurious treatment, even to the calling in question of his apostleship, and impeaching his veracity, 2 Cor. i. 17. yet he abated nothing in his fervent love towards them, or his labour to promote their edification: “Ye are in our hearts to die and to live with you,” says the apostle, ch. vii. 3. Still would he gladly spend and be spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved them,

the less he was loved in return. Keeping his eye steadily fixed upon the evils and disorderly proceedings among them, which could not but mar their joy in the Lord, and impede their progress in the holiness of the truth, he addresses his instructions, admonitions, and exhortations to the immediate purpose of rectifying these disorderly and improper things; and it is in this way that the words of our text come recommended to our particular consideration. In attempting a brief illustration of them,

I. We shall consider the PROMISES here referred to.

II. The PEOPLE to whom these promises are made.

III. The DUTIES they are called to, in order to their enjoying these promises, or, which is the same thing, the blessings included therein.

I. The *promises* which are here referred to are those mentioned in the foregoing chapter, ver. 16, 17, 18. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

1. The Lord promises to *dwell* or reside in his church or among his people: "God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, ver. 16, which promise is taken from Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. "I will set my tabernacle among you; and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you." The two expressions *walk* and

dwell may have a respect, the former to the moveable tent or tabernacle, in which the divine presence resided among Israel until Solomon's days; the latter to the house or temple which he built, and in which the glory of Jehovah afterwards dwelt. This appears from the Lord's words to David when he purposed to build the temple: "Thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me an house for me to DWELL in? Whereas I have not DWELT in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle: in all the places wherein I have WALKED with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes (or judges, 1 Chron. xvii. 6.) of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" 2 Sam. vii. 5, 6, 7. This promise of the Divine presence and residence among his people is renewed about the time in which that temple was destroyed, and in reference to gospel times, when the Lord should make an everlasting covenant of peace with them, and when David, or the Messiah, should be their prince for ever: "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them, and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore," Ezek. xxxvii. 26—28. Under the New Testament, Christ makes a similar promise to his people, "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and take up our ABODE with him," John xiv. 23. And in relation to his churches, he is represented as "WALKING in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holding the stars in his right hand," Rev. ii. 1. This promise will be accomplished in its highest sense

when the new Jerusalem shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and when the voice shall be heard out of heaven, saying, “Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall DWELL with them,” Rev. xxi. 2, 3. This promise, as it belongs to gospel times, imports the richest spiritual blessings. The Lord dwells and walks among his people to *protect* and *defend* them from their enemies; “God is in the midst of his church; she shall not be moved,” Ps. xlvi. 5. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” Matt. xvi. 18. He dwells among them in the communication of the *gifts of his Spirit* for their edification and growth in grace; and so Christ hath given gifts unto men, that the Lord God might dwell among them,” Ps. lxxviii. 18. Eph. iv. 8—14. He dwells among them by the *gracious influences of his Spirit*, making his word and ordinances produce their proper effects upon them, enlightening, correcting, quickening, comforting, sanctifying, and sealing them unto the day of redemption; see John xvi. 7, 13. Rev. ii. 7. Eph. i. 13, 17, 18. ch. iii. 16.—20. ch. iv. 30. Thus they have communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John i. 3. So that God dwells in them and walks among them in the most intimate manner by his Spirit, giving them the distinguishing tokens of his love and favour.

2. Another promise is, “And I will be their God, and they shall be my people,” ver. 16. This promise is closely connected with the former, not only in this place, but in the passages of the Old Testament to which it refers. Thus it is said, Lev. xxvi. 12, “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” And in Ezek. xxxvii. 27, “My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and

they shall be my people." And their happiness in the New Jerusalem is described thus: "He shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God," Rev. xxi. 3. This is the grand promise of the new covenant, Jer. xxxi. 33. It is not only expressive of the covenant relation between God and his people, but of his acting towards them in a suitableness towards that relation; and so it imports his *justifying* them, or forgiving their iniquities, Rom. iii. 29, 30.—his *writing his law* in their hearts, Jer. xxxi. 33.—his *adopting* them as his children, Rom. ix. 26. Rev. xxi. 7.—his *raising* them from the dead, Matt. xxii. 32.—and his having prepared for them an heavenly *city*, Heb. xi. 16. In short, it imports, that all his perfections are engaged in their behalf to make them finally and completely happy in the enjoyment of himself as their satisfying and everlasting portion. On the other hand, their being his people imports their being his peculiar property, who know, love, own, trust, and delight in him as their God; and who yield themselves up to serve him, and shew forth his praise, 1 Pet. ii. 9. "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord," Psal. cxliv. 15.

3. He further promises, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." ver. 17, 18. In obeying the divine call, of not being unequally yoked with unbelievers, but coming out from among them, and being separate, they may undergo many worldly inconveniences, and be disowned and cast off by their nearest friends and relations; but, for their encouragement the Lord says, "I will receive you," viz. into his favour, family, and protection, and be a better relation to them than any they can have or can lose upon earth. This

was the Psalmist's confidence, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Psal. xxvii. 10. The relation into which he receives them is that of his children: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." This promise was made in the first instance to Solomon, who was a type of Christ, 2 Sam. vii. 14. and it is applied to Christ himself, Heb. i. 5. and here it is applied to all true Christians as being members of his body, and so the children and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. His being a Father to them imports his acting towards them as such in all things conducive to their present and eternal happiness, and advancing them at last to that heavenly dignity and glory with Christ which becomes such a Father to bestow on his sons and daughters, 1 John iii. 1—3. And it also implies their regeneration and their possessing the temper and characters of his children. These are the words of Jehovah of Hosts, 2 Sam. vii. 8. or of the Lord Almighty, as in the passage before us, and who is faithful to his promises, and fully able to make them good. Thus having considered the promises to which the apostle refers, we proceed now,

II. To consider *the people to whom these promises are made*. It is evident that they were made in the first instance to the ancient church of Israel, which stood related to God by the Sinai covenant, which was typical, and is now done away; and while they observed the terms of that covenant, and kept themselves separate from the heathen nations and their ways, as a holy people unto God, these promises were accomplished to them in a suitableness to the nature of that dispensation. The Lord dwelt among them and walked among them. His

special presence resided in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, where he placed his name; and he acted towards them as their God and Father, treating them as his people and children. But when they broke his covenant, and fell into idolatry, and so had communion with the heathen in their abominations and pollutions, then he withdrew his favourable presence. "He was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel, so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men: and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand," Psal. lxxviii. 59—62. He afterwards took up his residence among them in the temple, but they revolted from him and polluted themselves with the abominations of the heathens, time after time, till at last they became so universally corrupt, and at the same time so self-confident and hardened against all admonition, that he sent them this message by his prophet Jeremiah: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations? Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim," Jer. vii. 9, 10, 14, 15. Accordingly he forsook that house, and delivered both it and them into the hands of their enemies, Jer. lii. 13, 28—30. Though after their return from captivity they were cured of gross idolatry as a nation, and the Lord acknowledged the second temple as his residence among them, yet they reverted into all other kinds of wicked-

ness, which they connected with a kind of zeal for the law and worship of the true God, while they added to all their guilt the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God : for which cause their house was forsaken of God and left desolate, and at last levelled with the ground, and they were cast off from being God's people, and scattered among the nations as it is at this day, and as it had been clearly foretold by our Lord, Luke xxi. 6, 24. Thus we see that though as a nation they had the promises which we have been considering, yet by their sins they frequently interrupted their enjoyment of them, and at last cut themselves off from having any claim to them as a nation, upon the footing of the old covenant by which they stood related to God, But,

2. These promises belong also to gospel times, and to the visible churches of Christ. This indeed is the object to which they ultimately pointed : and so the apostle applies them immediately to the Corinthians, in a state of separation from an unbelieving and idolatrous world. “*Ye are the temple of the living God : as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,*” chap. vi. 16. This application of these promises to the churches of the saints under the New Testament clearly shews, what the Holy Spirit ultimately intended by them. It shews that ancient Israel were our *types* ; and that the things promised to them are verified, in their spirit and truth, to the true Israel of God. This distinction between Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the spirit, is frequently mentioned in the apostolic writings and illustrated in various ways and forms of speech : particularly in Rom. ix. 4—8. Gal. iv. 22—28. 1 Cor. x. 18. It is illustrated to us by the two mothers and the two sons, in Abraham's family. Ishmael was

born after the flesh, or according to the ordinary course of nature. Isaac was by *promise*. Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, was the bond-woman. Sarah, was the free. Now these, says the apostles, are the two covenants, that is, they represent in a figure, the two covenants. The covenant represented by Hagar, the bond-woman, is that which God made with Israel from Mount Sinai, when he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, and is that which the scripture calls the *old* or *first covenant*. Like Hagar, it brought forth children to Abraham in a state of bondage or servitude, but never could communicate freedom or heirship to them: so that although Israel after the flesh, were the children of Abraham, and sons of Sarah the free-woman according to the flesh, yet, as subjects of the covenant of which Hagar was the type, they were, in comparison of the children of the new covenant, only in the state of Ishmael, the bond-woman's son.

In opposition to all this, the true Israel of God, the children of the new covenant, to whom these gracious promises are made, were represented by Isaac, who was *by promise*, that is, he was promised to Abraham when he and Sarah were past age, and the promise was accomplished by a supernatural power, such as raises the dead, Rom. iv. 17. And so the apostle terms this, a being *born after the Spirit*, Gal. iv. 29, which is the case with all the subjects of the new covenant, to whom the promises in our text are made. "They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. For he "of his own will begets them by the word of truth," Jam. i. 18.—they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word—have their hearts purified by faith—and so are "all the children of God by faith in Christ

Jesus." Gal. iii. 26.—And because they are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts"—they are adopted into his family, consequently are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of faith, Eph. ii. 9. Now, it is to the disciples of Christ, in a state of separation from the world, obeying his revealed will, and especially observing his new command of brotherly love, and walking in all his statutes and ordinances blameless, that these promises are particularly made.

III. We shall now consider, what are *the particular duties here enjoined upon Christians, in order to their partaking of these promises.*

1. There is, in the foregoing chapter, a solemn call to the disciples of Christ, to separate themselves from the unbelieving world, particularly in religious fellowship. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," chap. vi. 14. And again, "wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing," ver. 17. The monstrous incongruity and inconsistency of the communion of believers with unbelievers, is presented to our consideration in terms peculiarly forcible and striking. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" ver. 14—16.

This separation is a most important part of Christian duty, and a strict regard to it is essentially necessary to the enjoyment of the blessings promised in the words of the text. At the same time, nothing is more manifes

than that many of the professed disciples of Christ pay little or no attention to it in the present day; while others are greatly divided in their judgments respecting both the nature and the extent to which this separation ought to be carried. Hence the extremes to which we may perceive them running, of what is termed "*marked separation*" on the one hand, and of "*mixed communion*" on the other. As these things greatly deface the beauty of the Christian church, and are a stumbling block to enquirers in their way to Zion, it is of importance to guard against them, and this can only be done, by a careful attention to the word of God.

It is abundantly evident that the duty here enjoined upon Christians includes in it, a separation *from the fellowship of all heathen idolaters*: that is, they are to have no religious intercourse with them in a way of worship. As idolatry was the established religion at Corinth in the apostle's days, some of the believing Corinthians appear to have been entangled by their ties in the way of natural relationship, or of friendships formed on earthly principles. A desire to accommodate themselves as much as possible to their acquaintance and friends, led them to temporise, by going occasionally into an idolatrous temple, and partaking of the sacrifices there offered. The apostle takes up the subject in the eighth and tenth chapters of his first epistle, and most solemnly reprobates their conduct in these instances. The things which the Gentiles sacrifice," says he "They sacrifice to demons and not to God. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of Demons. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of demons." 1 Cor. x. 20, 21. Christianity tolerates no such licentious conduct in its friends, but calls them to have no fellowship with the makers or worshipers of idols.

They are also called to separaté themselves from all religious fellowship *with unbelieving Jews*. True, indeed, the Jews had themselves been separated from the idolatrous heathen nations as a peculiar people unto God; but this national separation came to an end, when they rejected the Messiah, and consequently they were broken off through unbelief; and so the disciples of Christ were forbidden to have any fellowship with them. In strict conformity with this, we find that when Paul was at Ephesus “he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God: but when divers of them were hardened and *believed not*, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, *he departed from them, and separated the disciples*,” Acts xix. 8, 9. And he enjoined the same thing upon the Hebrews, when he thus wrote: “Let us go forth, therefore, unto him *without the camp* (of Israel) bearing his reproach; for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come,” Heb. xiii. 13, 14.

Once more: The disciples of Christ are called to separate *from all false professors and corrupters of Christianity*, whether in doctrine, discipline, or worship. Probably this view of the matter may bring the subject more home to us in the present day, than either of the foregoing particulars. The manifest impropriety of holding fellowship with open idolaters and avowed infidels must strike every reflecting mind; but antichrist has unhappily mingled the church and the world; by his influence a form of godliness has been drawn over multitudes who are destitute of its power, so that the real disciples of Christ are in danger of forgetting the apostolic admonition, *from such turn away*, 2Tim. iii. 5. Not only must the people of God “cease to hear the

instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge," by avoiding all false teachers, 2 John, verse 10, 11. but the call to those of them who are entangled in the corrupt communion of antichrist, is, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities," Rev. xviii. 4, 5. It is the immediate design of all national establishments of religion to counteract the separation of Christ's disciples from the men of the world; and the various alliances of church and state are formed for the direct purpose of mingling the people of God with unbelievers: we cannot, therefore, require a stronger proof of their antichristian tendency. But the blessedness held forth in the promises we have been considering is not to be enjoyed in that corrupt communion, and if we would partake of it, we must separate ourselves to the law of the Lord our God.

Lastly, I remark, that this command to the disciples of Christ to separate themselves from all impure connections, includes in it, a withdrawing from all societies which are *not united by, and cemented upon, the truth*, so as to love one another for its sake; and who have not the discipline of Christ's house in exercise, for keeping the communion pure and visibly separate from the world. It will scarcely be denied by any one who possesses a competent acquaintance with the present state of Christendom, that societies abound under the name of Christian churches which have scarcely any other bond of union than the man who conducts their worship; they are united in *his* support, perhaps from motives of personal esteem, admiration of his talents, family connections, or private friendships and political consi-

derations. The bond of union in the real churches of Christ is something widely different from all these things, and it stands quite independent of them; it is *the truth* which they believe concerning the Son of God—his person, character, work, and salvation, in which they find all their comfort and joy. Crediting this truth, they have all one faith, one hope, one baptism, one Lord whom they obey, and one common centre of charity; they love one another “for the truth’s sake,” which dwells in all their hearts, by the faith and love of it, and so attaches them one to another. This truth, which is nothing else than the testimony of God concerning his Son, is the burden of their mutual song, and the ground of their common glorying; and so it stands wholly independent of the characters and attractive qualities of such as are employed in preaching it. A union formed upon the truth will not be affected by the removal of an individual from a church, however high his station, or eminent his attainments; the minister may die or be removed elsewhere, but if the union of the members be formed by the truth, it will remain unaffected by any such event. But the true scriptural bond of union cannot possibly be maintained in any church, without a careful and strict regard to the instituted discipline of the kingdom of Christ, as enjoined by himself, Matt. xviii. 15—18. and also by his apostle, 1 Cor. v. Where this is neglected it is impossible to obey the call to Christian separation; on the contrary, we must have fellowship with unbelievers. What shall we say of those societies, then, in which this discipline is almost wholly unknown; and indeed in which the truth itself is almost as great a stranger! Surely the disciples of Christ, if alive to their own interest and

happiness, should attend to the divine call, and separate themselves from such impure societies. But it is time that I proceed,

2. To consider the exhortation which the apostle connects with a dutiful attention to this call to separation: "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This shews that it is not sufficient for us to study purity of communion, as it respects the external worship of God; we must also cultivate personal holiness, in all manner of conversation and godliness, if we would enjoy the blessedness connected with being the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Let us, therefore, consider the import and the suitableness of this pointed exhortation. There are two kinds of *filthiness* or pollution here mentioned, corresponding to the complex person of man—the *flesh* and the *spirit*, from both of which believers are called to cleanse themselves.

(1.) The exhortation to cleanse themselves from *all filthiness of the flesh*, implies in it the mortification of every fleshly lust, all intemperance in eating and drinking, and every species of impurity in the gratification of their sensual appetites. The inhabitants of Corinth were much addicted to revellings and pollutions of various kinds, and their idolatrous worship both countenanced and promoted them. From several hints dropped in the course of the epistles to that church, it would appear that even some of their own number were not exempt from the charge of indulgence in these things; (see 1 Cor. v. 9—11. chap. vi. 15—20. and 2 Cor. xii. 21.) and even in our own day, it is awful to think, how little account is made of such impurities in

the professed churches of Christ. But the gospel inculcates universal holiness ; it teaches believers that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and that they are not their own, but bought with a price, and therefore they are laid under the strongest obligations to glorify God with their bodies, as well as their spirits, for both are the Lord's.

(2.) There is also a *filthiness of the spirit*, or mind, from which the people of God are exhorted to purify themselves. In this mental pollution must be classed every species of idolatry, profaneness, and whatever is opposite to the fear, the love, and the worship of the living and true God. Christians must have no participation or fellowship with these things ; they are an abomination to the Lord, and provoke his jealousy, 1 Cor. x. Moreover, this "filthiness of the spirit" includes pride, envy, hatred, emulation, wrath, strife, and every malevolent disposition opposite to benevolence and brotherly love, 1 Cor. iii. 3. 2 Cor. xii. 20. Gal. v. 20, 21. These are the tempers and dispositions which characterize the old man, or the corruption of our nature, and must be put off as we would lay aside a filthy garment, for the indulgence of them must exclude from the kingdom of heaven. To all which we may add, that the exhortation also forbids every corruption of the religion of Christ, by means of the doctrines of men—all human traditions, commandments, and superstition of every kind ; for, however little account modern professors may make of these things, the apostle classes them under the denomination of *will worship*, and traces their origin to a *fleshly mind puffed up with vanity* and self-conceit. His solemn admonition to his Christian brethren, therefore, is "touch not ; taste not ; handle not ;" have nothing to do with things that are

unauthorized either by express precept or approved example, in the worship of God; for all such things shall perish with the using, Col. ii.

Now, a continual *cleansing* or purification from all these things is necessary in order to any society becoming *a holy temple to the Lord*. Without it, he cannot dwell among them, nor walk among them, but his soul must abhor them, as he intimated to ancient Israel, Lev. xxvi. 11. The exhortation, consequently, implies that if they indulge or connive at these things, they must expect the severest effects of his displeasure, for he will certainly punish them; so runs the threatening, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,” 1 Cor. iii. 17. Indeed without this purification and cleansing, the mere act of external separation, though accompanied with a decent profession and attention to the scriptural order of the house of God in any people, is of no consequence, but rather an aggravation of their guilt.

(3.) In opposition to the indulgence of any species of uncleanness either of body or mind, believers must be engaged in “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” To *perfect holiness* is to be advancing and improving in purity both of body and spirit, 1 Cor. vii. 34.—mortifying the deeds of the body, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and aiming at the perfect standard of holiness set before us in the gospel—the example and precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is to be done *in the fear of God*, under a deep impression of his omniscience, who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, and who will at last give to every one according to their works, Rev. ii. 23. Believers must continually keep in view his holiness,

and the purity which becomes his temple, remembering that he is jealous of his honour, and the reverence that is due to his exalted and glorious majesty ; for he will be sanctified in all those that approach unto him.

This holiness must be preserved *visibly* in the churches of the saints, by the faithful exercise of discipline among the members, according to the Lord's own appointment, Matt. xviii. 15—18. with 1 Cor. v. 1—8. And it must also be maintained internally or *personally* by the fear of God : “ Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” says the apostle Peter, “ make him the object of your fear and your dread ;” and “ let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth to deny ungodliness, &c.

Having thus briefly illustrated the words of the text, viz. the promises referred to, the persons to whom these promises are made, and the duties incumbent on those who would participate in the promised blessings, it may be proper to bring the subject home to ourselves, and enquire, what improvement we should make of it. And,

1. The subject we have been considering is replete with instruction to the members of Christian churches. It shews how intimately the Lord has connected together our duty and our privilege. It is surely a high state of privilege to become a citizen of Zion—from being strangers and foreigners to become fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of faith ; to have access to God as our own God and Father reconciled unto us through the blood of his Son ; to be adopted into his family, and partake of all the privileges of that adoption ; to have encouragement to draw near to his throne at all times with the confidence of children to an affec-

tionate parent, confessing our sins and asking mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need; to cast all our care upon him, in the confidence that he careth for us; to be anxious about nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto him; and thus to have the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; to enjoy communion with him in the ordinances of his house, having our souls made glad with the light of his countenance lifted up upon us; to be filled with all peace and joy in believing, and made to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost; to grow in faith and hope and love, and in every fruit of the Spirit, in conformity to Christ here, and in meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. What has this world to bestow that is comparable to such a state of enjoyment and privilege? But, behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God! What an inducement to forsake the family of Satan, and be separated from them:" Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," But,

2. Let us be reminded by this subject of the obligation to duty which we are laid under by the high state of privilege to which those are called who are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Remember that "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." It is a solemn admonition which the apostle gives to the Corinthian church in his first epistle, chap. iii. 16, 17, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that

the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Let us then hold fast the grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Study to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Let all your things be done with charity. Beware of lightly esteeming any of the commands of Christ, or of mingling with them any of the doctrines and commandments of men, which cannot but be very displeasing to him who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holdeth the stars in his right hand; who will make all the churches to know that it is He who searcheth the reins and hearts, and who will give every one according to his works. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

SERMON XII.

THE APOSTOLIC MANNER OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL.



1 COR. ii. 1—5.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

THERE appear to have been certain teachers, or false apostles in the church of Corinth, who valued themselves on their eloquence, their philosophic wisdom, and human learning, by means of which they corrupted the word of God, created schisms in the church, and led their respective partisans to admire *them*, instead of glorying only in the Lord, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 18, 21.

To heal these divisions, and to bring the authors of them into discredit, the apostle uses various arguments; and among others, he observes, that God, in calling men either to the knowledge of the truth, or to be instru-

ments in publishing it, had no regard to the boasted advantages of birth, or worldly power, or eloquence, or human learning, but, on the contrary, had set at nought all these qualifications which men so much admire, and which they consider as the most likely to insure success, and that he had chosen for this arduous and important work, mean, weak, plain and illiterate men; that by such means he had destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent; and that God's design in this was, that no flesh should glory in his presence, chap. i. 19—31.

But lest any should think that Paul himself was an exception to this rule of the divine procedure, as being versed in the learning of the Jewish scribe, and probably not unacquainted with the oratory and philosophic learning of the Greeks, he reminds them in the verses which have been read, that he made use of none of these things in preaching the gospel to them, but for very weighty reasons had purposely avoided every thing of that kind. In speaking from this passage, we shall advert to the following particulars.

- I. The subject matter of the gospel testimony.
- II. The apostle's manner of declaring it.
- III. His reasons for observing that method, And
- IV. Make some observations upon the subject.

1. The subject matter, or great and leading theme of the gospel testimony is here declared to be Christ Jesus and him crucified, chap. i. 23. chap. ii. 2. It is a testimony that Jesus is the Christ or promised Messiah, Acts xvii. 3.—That he is the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, Acts ix. 20. 1 Tim. iii. 16.—That he came into the world to save sinners, chap. i. 15.—That

he died for our sins according to the scriptures ; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. and that having by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, Heb. i. 3.—That all things are put under him, chap. ii. 8, and that he is appointed of God to be the judge of quick and dead, Acts x. 42.—That to him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins, Acts x. 43. and shall not perish, but have everlasting life, John iii. 16. This is the gospel which the apostle preached unto men, and which he sums up in the doctrine of the *cross* or of *Christ crucified*, that being the most prominent and characteristical feature of the whole ; and this is that doctrine which was a stumbling block to the carnal Jew as cutting off his worldly hopes and self-righteous claims, and which appeared foolishness to the Greeks, as opposite to all their wise maxims and philosophical reasonings ; but which in reality, and in the eyes of all who are spiritually enlightened, is the wisdom and power of God, 1 Cor. i. 18, 24.

He terms the gospel the *testimony of God*, ver. 1, and that with the greatest propriety. 1. Because none but God could make known the things contained in the gospel. No man could discover them by any natural principles he is possessed of, nor by any reasoning from such principles : they fall not within the sphere of his natural sensations and reflections, nor could he find them out by the deepest researches into the mysteries of creation. They are supernatural truths, the deep things of God which were hid in him, and which he alone could reveal. To set forth the impossibility of discovering the truths of the gospel in any other way than by an imme-

diate revelation from God, the apostle quotes the words of Isaiah, (chap. lxiv. 4.) "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But," says he, "God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God; for what man knoweth the things" *i. e.* the secret thoughts "of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him; even so the things," *i. e.* the secret counsels and purposes "of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God," ver. 9—13. Now, if the subject of the gospel testimony is such as could never have entered into the heart of man, either to discover or contrive it; if it is opposite to the spirit and wisdom of the world, while yet it gives such a display of the wisdom and power of God as is not to be seen in all his other works; then it must be the testimony of God, the pure revelation of his Spirit. 2. He terms it "the wisdom of God in a mystery," by which he means that it was the mystery or hidden sense of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, ver. 7. The fulfilment of prophecy proves it to be a divine revelation, and as the gospel answers to the prophecies as their true sense and fulfilment, and was itself confirmed by the miracles which attended its first publication, it must of necessity be the testimony of God. Let us now consider,

II. The apostle's manner of declaring this divine testimony.

1. He disclaims the use of all human art and learning in preaching the gospel. "And I, brethren, when

I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom," ver. 1—4.

By *excellency of speech* he means oratory, or the flowery ornaments of rhetoric. The Greeks studied oratory as a science, and cultivated it by practice; and such was the influence of their persuasive eloquence, that it was used as an engine of state, and carried all before it in their popular assemblies. It would appear that the false teachers also made use of this insinuating art to gain upon the Corinthians, and perhaps with a view to eclipse the apostle, and lessen him in their esteem, for it was said by some of them that his speech was contemptible, 2 Cor. x. 10. He admits, that in declaring the testimony of God he did not seek to please their fancy or captivate their minds by the charms of elocution. He neither wished to court their applause as an orator, nor to set off the message he had from God by such tinsel ornaments, which were unsuitable to the divine authority, the dignity, the excellency, and the importance of the subject, on which their eternal salvation depended.

By *excellency of wisdom* he means human learning. The Greeks, and particularly their philosophers, valued themselves much upon what they called *wisdom*; such as their knowledge of natural philosophy, arts and sciences, and their various speculations about virtue, the moral fitness of things, man's chief good, &c. in which they were much divided. Besides this, there was the eastern philosophy, the boasted knowledge of the Gnostic, and the whimsical cabbalistical learning of the Jewish scribe. All these kinds of wisdom came to be very early

mixed with the gospel by false teachers, by which it was greatly corrupted ; and it would seem there were some such teachers in the church at Corinth who attempted to establish the supernatural truths of the gospel upon, or explain them by, philosophical principles and reasonings. In opposition to this the apostle says, he “ came not with excellency of wisdom,”—that Christ sent him to preach the gospel, “ not with wisdom of words,” ch. i. 17. and that his “ speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom,” chap. ii. 4. This wisdom he terms “ the wisdom of the world” which is foolishness with God, which cometh to nought, and by which the world knew not God, chap. i. 19—22. chap. ii. 6. chap. iii. 19. He cautions the Colossians against the false teachers who mixed it with the gospel. “ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,” Col. ii. 8. and he charges Timothy to avoid this kind of wisdom, “ O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so called, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith,” 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. Such was the opinion which the apostle entertained of the learning and philosophy of his time, and of its tendency to corrupt the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ, and therefore he used none of it in preaching the gospel. He did not acquire his knowledge of the gospel by his skill and industry in philosophical researches, nor by rational deductions from natural principles ; but he obtained it by an immediate supernatural revelation from God, and he declared it simply as he had received it, resting it upon its own evidence ; so that human wisdom

or philosophic learning had no place here. Having thus seen what the apostle avoided in preaching the gospel, let us now

2. Show in what manner he actually did preach it. He gives an account of this in various parts of his epistles to this church. We shall take notice of some of these, and then of what he says in the passage under consideration.

(1.) He preached the gospel to them *purely*, just as he had received it, without corrupting or mixing it with any thing else. So he says, “ I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,” chap. xv. 3. As he kept nothing back of what he was commissioned to reveal, but declared the whole counsel of God ; so he delivered nothing under colour of revelation but what he had received as such : nor did he mix any of his own inventions with that revelation ; and so he says, “ We are not as many who corrupt the word of God,” 2 Cor. ii. 17.

(2.) He preached it *sincerely*, honestly, and with uprightness of heart. “ Not walking in craftiness, or handling the word of God deceitfully,” to compass party schemes or sinister ends ; “ but by manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God,” 2 Cor. iv. 2. He also opposes this sincerity to corrupting the word of God, “ For we are not as many who corrupt the word of God ; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ,” 2 Cor. ii. 17.

(3.) He used great *plainness of speech*, 2 Cor. iii. 12. This is opposed unto the darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, which veiled the truth under shadows and types, as was signified by the vail upon Moses’ face. But as this vail is done away in Christ, the apostle declared the gospel in great plainness of speech, laying open the

great truths of the gospel in clear and simple language, level to every capacity.

(4.) He preached the gospel in *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Some by the *demonstration of the Spirit* understand the inward convincing evidence of the Spirit upon the minds of men; but though it is admitted that no man will believe the gospel without the influence of the Holy Spirit upon his heart; yet as the apostle is here speaking of *the manner* in which he preached the gospel, it is most natural to understand it of that demonstration of the Spirit which his doctrine carried in it, and by which it was manifested to be the testimony of God. The evidence of its truth was not founded on arguments drawn from natural principles, but on the supernatural demonstration of the Spirit; and this demonstration appears to me to be that evidence which results from the exact agreement of the gospel with the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. This is an argument which the apostles always used in preaching the gospel, viz. that what they declared was according to the scriptures or prophecies of the Old Testament. Agreeably to this he says, "Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," ver. 13. In preaching they neither used oratory, nor philosophical arguments to convince their hearers; but, which was infinitely more convincing, by comparing the revelation of the gospel with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they showed their exact agreement, and so demonstrated that both were a revelation from God. To this demonstration of the Spirit, he adds that *of power*, i. e. miracles, which were works of divine power whereby their mission and doctrine were demonstrated to be

from God; for thus, "God bore them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to his own will," Heb. ii. 4. The apostle refers the Corinthians to this proof of his apostleship and doctrine, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds," 2 Cor. xii. 12. Let us consider

III. The apostle's reasons for preaching the gospel without the use of oratory and human wisdom.

1. One reason he gives is in these words, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," ver. 5. The wisdom of men is their learned and ingenious arguments and reasonings upon principles aside from revelation, though under pretext of explaining and confirming it. He would not have their faith built upon any doctrines or arguments of human wisdom; for in that case it would not be divine faith: it would not be faith in God or in his supernatural power, but in the wisdom, authority, and reasoning of men. Besides, if their faith of the gospel was grounded only upon human wisdom, it would be upon a very unstable foundation, for human wisdom and reasoning with respect to matters of faith is ever fluctuating; and the arguments which once convinced may be overturned by opposite ones; and in fact, those who depend most upon human wisdom and philosophical reasoning are perfect sceptics. But such as have their faith founded upon the supernatural power of God, confirming his truth, and as able to accomplish all that he hath said, their faith is divine, and rests upon an immoveable foundation.

2. Another reason which the apostle gives why he

did not preach the gospel with the wisdom of words, was, "lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect," chap. i. 17. It is by Christ's being lifted up on the cross that he was to draw all men unto him; and it is with the preaching of the cross that the power of God concurred for the salvation of men; but had he dressed the gospel in artificial ornaments of speech, and established it upon philosophical principles, the doctrine of the cross would have been thereby corrupted, and perhaps exploded, so as to have no effect; or whatever effect it had, it might be overlooked and attributed to another cause, viz. human eloquence and learning, instead of the power of God accompanying the doctrine of the cross, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

3. A further reason assigned by the apostle why he chose this plain and inartificial method of preaching the gospel is, to "cut off all pretence for glorying in men." This was an evil which prevailed greatly in the Corinthian church, and which the apostle censures severely in the following chapter. This glorying in men he ranks among the works of the flesh; it gave rise to envyings and strife and factions, on account of which he pronounced them carnal, even *babes in Christ*, chap. iii. 1—3.; and he proceeds in the following verses to expose the vanity of glorying in men: "Who is Paul, or Apollos, but the servants of Christ, by whom ye believed?" One planted, or sowed the seed of the kingdom, and another came after him and watered it; but then neither he that planted, nor he that watered was any thing—the gospel derived all its success from God, who gave the increase. It is He that enlightens the understanding; opens the heart; causes the word of truth to enter the mind with conviction, so as to produce faith and love, and become the means of sancti-

fication. The apostle declares he “preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and himself their *servant* for Jesus’ sake,” 2 Cor. iv. 5. “Therefore, let no man,” says he, “glory in men : for all things are yours : whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world ; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s,” chap. iii. 21—23.

4. Lastly, The apostle had another and most important reason for declining all excellency of speech or of wisdom in preaching the gospel, and that is, that all the glory of saving sinners might redound to its great author—that he who glorieth should glory in the Lord. In this way alone could he concur with God in seconding his designs, and furthering the methods of his grace. As God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise ; and the weak things of this world to confound the mighty ; and base things of the world and things which are despised to bring to nought things that are, for this wise and holy end, “that no flesh should glory in his presence,” so the apostle kept this in view in all his labours as a minister of Christ, never for a moment losing sight of it, but carefully regulating all his conduct by it : hence he says to this same church, “We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves,” &c. 2 Cor. x. 12. Such conduct, he pronounces to be unwise, because it stands opposed to *glorying in the Lord*, ver. 17. Paul had been honoured with much success in preaching Christ’s gospel, but “the weapons of his warfare were mighty *through God*,” as he acknowledges, chap. x. 4. He laboured more abundantly than all the apostles in promoting the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom ; but on a review of his toils and travels, we find him saying “by the grace of God I am

what I am," 1 Cor. xv. 10. He was favoured with peculiar manifestations, in which he might have gloried, had he been so disposed; but he declined it, and tells the Corinthians that in nothing would he glory, but *in his infirmities*, 2 Cor. xii. 5, 9. and he chose this ground of glorying "that the power of Christ might rest upon him." Hence he *took pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for, he adds, "when I am weak, then am I strong," ver. 10. But let us now

IV. Make a few observations on what has been said. And,

1. We are taught by this subject, that the doctrine of the cross, or in other words, Christ crucified is the grand distinguishing topic of the gospel—the hinge on which all other doctrines turn. It made the capital figure in the preaching of the apostles and first ministers of the word, and every other subject was kept in its proper state of subordination to it. How different is the case with thousands in our day, who yet claim to be the ministers of Christ, and preachers of the everlasting gospel. Paul was determined to make known nothing else—of many modern teachers it may be affirmed without any breach of charity, that the testimony of God concerning his Son is the last topic to occupy their attention, or engage their ministry; yet this we may confidently affirm, that where this doctrine is sparingly touched upon—when any of its ends are set aside, or any thing connected with it as the foundation of hope to the guilty, wretched, perishing children of men, there the gospel is not preached, or it is essentially corrupted; for, as there is no other name given under heaven whereby salvation can be obtained

but the name of Jesus Christ, so, the apostle has shewn us the vast importance which he attaches to the faithful preaching of this doctrine, in what he says to the Galatians, chap. i. 6—9. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” It surely is not in the power of language to express, more pointedly, the paramount importance which the apostle attached to the simple doctrine of Christ crucified, nor the jealousy which possessed his mind, lest it should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus..

2. Another important inference which we deduce from this subject is, that the doctrine of the cross, or the testimony of God which the apostle held forth in his preaching, is divinely adapted to promote all the salutary and saving purposes for which the gospel is published to the world. It is at once the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation, to all that believe it. To the Jews it was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks it was foolishness: from the former it cut off all his worldly hopes and expectations of a temporal Messiah, and it was folly to the latter inasmuch as it ran counter to all his wise maxims and philosophical speculations about the dignity of human nature, the beauty of moral virtue, and the deformity of vice; yet the apostle well knew that it was the only doctrine ever made known to mortals that suited their guilt and misery, and that, consequently, was calculated to do them good.

Its influence is the most powerful to humble men—to reconcile them to God—to communicate peace to their guilty consciences—to inspire them with hope in the divine mercy—to excite their gratitude—and make them fruitful in every good word and work.

What doctrine, for instance, can be so humbling to the pride of the human heart as the doctrine of Christ crucified? It is the testimony of God that all have sinned and come short of his glory; that as sinners they are exposed to his wrath and are under the condemning sentence of the divine law, which denounces its curses upon every offender. The divine testimony shuts up the whole human race in one common state of guilt and condemnation, not only as sinners and ungodly, but as enemies and without strength, and consequently incapable of extricating themselves from this awful predicament. This is a most humiliating doctrine to the guilty race of Adam, but it is presupposed in the mission of Christ, which always recognizes this doctrine, and commends the love and mercy of God in giving his Son to die for such guilty and hell-deserving rebels. But the doctrine of the cross is not only all-powerful to strip the Pharisee of his self-righteous pleas for standing before his Maker on the footing of his own obedience, but

It contains within itself the most powerful motives to disarm the human mind of its enmity against God and his holy law, and to bring those that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness into a state of reconciliation. It displays the amazing love of God in giving his Son—his well-beloved Son to suffer, and bleed, and die—to die the accursed death of the cross, in order to redeem us from the curse of the divine law and procure for us everlasting happiness. And when the mind is enlightened, through divine influence, to perceive on

the one hand the meanness, insignificance, and guilt of the objects in behalf of whom this love is exercised ; and on the other, the dignity, the worth, and the dearness to his heavenly Father of Him who was given for their sakes, to be the ransom-price of their redemption ; and withal contemplating in the glass of the gospel what Christ condescended to suffer for the sake of his guilty people, at the command of his heavenly Father, when he sank in deep waters and all the billows of the divine indignation against sin overwhelmed his holy soul : when under the hidings of his heavenly Father's countenance he was led to cry out, “ My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ”—where shall we find a motive so calculated in its own nature to slay the enmity of the human heart, and reconcile sinners to God as the doctrine of Christ crucified. It is the power of God as well as his wisdom. Besides

This doctrine is all-sovereign to communicate peace to the guilty conscience. In the atoning blood of Jesus—the sinners substitute and representative, all the demands of law and justice have obtained their amplest satisfaction. In his obedience unto death, the law was magnified and made honourable—sin was completely expiated—the curse removed and everlasting righteousness brought in, which righteousness is unto and upon all that believe, without difference of Jew or Gentile, circumcision or uncircumcision, bond or free. It is a very just observation that it requires as much to satisfy an awakened conscience as it takes to fulfil the divine law, and answer its holy requirements. But all this is found in the death of the Son of God—an eternally divine person, whose obedience was commensurate to its utmost demands, and in whose atoning blood the jus-

tice of God is completely and eternally satisfied, as is fully proved by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Moreover,

This doctrine lays a solid foundation of hope to the guilty and perishing sinner. Viewing the divine substitute as sustaining the persons, and suffering the punishment that was due to the iniquities of his people in his own body on the tree, when he died the just for the unjust, that he might bring them unto God—Seeing the God of peace bringing again from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and for the suffering of death crowning him with endless life and immortal glory at his own right hand in the heavens—thus rewarding him for his unparalleled humiliation, and exalting him to the highest honour and dignity in conjunction with himself—beholding all the perfections of Deity as glorified in the death of the Saviour, and all delightfully harmonizing in the salvation of the guilty, mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, and hearing the life-giving law issue from the eternal throne, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else: a just God and a Saviour,” the sinner now finds in the doctrine of Christ crucified, a glorious and all-sufficient hope, wholly independent of any thing in or about himself; a hope founded on the finished work of the Redeemer, and brought near unto him in the testimony and promise of the everlasting gospel.

This excites his lively gratitude to the Father of mercies and God of all grace and consolation. His language now is, “Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift.” “What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits?”

“ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ shall appear again, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” He now feels the constraining influence of the love of Christ, leading him thus to judge, that “if one died for all, then have all died in him,” and that he died for this express purpose, “that they who live through his death should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.” All his obedience is now the spontaneous effusion of a grateful heart, springing from love to the atonement in which he finds all his salvation and all his desire. He considers that he is not his own, but bought with a price, and consequently laid under the strongest obligations to glorify God with his body and with his spirit which are his.

In fine, the doctrine of the cross of Christ comprises in it the most powerful motives to induce the believer to be fruitful in every good word and work—to love God and keep his commandments. He is taught that holiness is the very end of his redemption—that Christ gave himself for his people that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. United to Christ by faith and love, as the branch is united to the vine, or the members to the head, he receives out of his fulness a continual supply, both of mercy to pardon and grace to help in time of need;—an abundant supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, making him fruitful in every thing to do the will of God. Abiding in the Saviour, and having his word abiding in him, he has his fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. Thus walking in the ways of the Lord, his strength is renewed from day to day, so

that he is enabled to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. The institutions of the gospel are to him so many wells of salvation, refreshing him from time to time, strengthening his faith and hope and quickening his languid affections. The apostle's doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers and praises of Zion, have all of them a salutary influence upon him, calling afresh to his recollection the doctrine of the cross on which all his hope is founded; deepening his convictions of the need of divine mercy, and leading him to glory only in the Lord, who is made of God unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

To conclude: Let these observations be improved by us in the way of correcting any erroneous sentiments that we may have imbibed respecting either the gospel itself, or what is essential to the preaching of it. We may meet with much in the present day, delivered both from the pulpit and the press, that is consistent with the gospel, and which presupposes it, but of which the gospel itself, unhappily, forms no part. The ONE GRAND THEME which engaged the discourse of the apostle, and entered so deeply into his ministry that he declared he was *determined to know nothing else*, viz. the testimony of God concerning his Son, is wanting in the ministrations of most of our modern preachers, and it is a defect which is ill compensated by flowers of rhetoric and the graces of elocution, by polished periods, or the wisdom of the schools. Let those who have unhappily been misled in their judgments, on this important subject, consider maturely the example of the apostle in the words of our text, and make it the subject of their imitation.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.



HEB. v. 7, 8, 9.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

IT is a remarkable declaration which the Lord makes, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, when calling the attention of sinful mortals to the rich aboundings of his pardoning mercy and grace, “ My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD: for, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Of the truth of this saying, he has given a striking demonstration in the method which he has devised of saving perishing sinners by means of the sufferings and death of his beloved Son. This divine scheme of salvation never could have entered the imagination of

man or angel: and now that it is revealed in his word, and the truth of it attested by miracles and prophecies, and every kind of evidence that is suited to give it confirmation, how few are there that receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of their most cordial acceptance! When the apostle Paul preached this doctrine among the polished Greeks, he was derided as a babler, and his doctrine accounted “foolishness.” But what is still more extraordinary, the same doctrine was “a stumbling block” to the Jews, who had in their hands the writings of the prophets, testifying before hand the sufferings of the Messiah, and the glory that was to follow them. How strong then must have been the prejudices of that nation, and how invincible to every thing but divine teaching, which could blind their minds to a doctrine that lay upon the very surface of their own scriptures, and fortify their hearts against it to such a degree as to prepare them for the dreadful undertaking of crucifying the Lord of life and glory.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we find the apostle insisting much upon this doctrine, vindicating the wisdom of God in this wondrous plan of salvation, and affirming, that so far from needing an apology, it was every way worthy of the universal Lord, and proprietor of all things, in bringing myriads of the human race to the happiness of the heavenly state, to adopt this method of effecting it, in making the Captain of salvation perfect through sufferings: and this is the interesting subject of his discourse in the words of my text.

The apostle had shewn in the foregoing verses, how Christ was constituted an high-priest by the word of the oath, and he now sets forth his previous consecration to that office by his own sacrifice, by which also all his people were sanctified. “For it became him for whom are

all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation *perfect* (or consecrate their high-priest) through sufferings," ch. ii. 10. Here he expresses the same thing when he says, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect (or consecrated, so the word is rendered, ch. vii. 28.) he became the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him; called (*προσκαρτερείθεις*) *pronounced* or *declared* of God, a high-priest after the order of Melchisedec." *i. e.* In the days of his flesh, before he entered upon his ministry in the heavens, he endured the most exquisite sufferings in his obedience unto death, as a sacrifice for sin, as appears by his strong crying and tears; and, being through these sufferings, or through his own blood, consecrated, and brought again from the dead, he was fitted to enter in within the vail; having something to offer as our high-priest, and so became the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, according as God hath declared—"Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

The *prayers and supplications* which the Apostle here refers to, were those which our Lord offered up during his agony in the garden; when "he fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;—O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it thy will be done." Matt. xxvi. 39—42. His *strong crying and tears*, seem to point particularly to his sufferings on the cross,

when “about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?—Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.” Matt. xxvii. 46—50.

In this strong crying we see he adopts the words of Ps. xxii. 1. and so makes that Psalm his own prayer; and from it we may learn more fully, the extremity of his sufferings, and the purport of his crying.

I shall now offer a few observations on the nature and end of our Lord’s sufferings, and then consider the use we ought to make of them.

1. We have an account of the exceeding greatness of his sufferings in the garden, as related by the Evangelists, and expressed by himself. “He began to be sorrowful and very heavy,” Matt. xxvi. 37. “He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.” Mark xiv. 33. “Being in an agony.” Luke xxii. 44. And this he expresses, saying to his disciples, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Here we may notice,

That the seat of his sufferings at this time was his *soul*; his body being no otherwise concerned than as it was affected by the distress of his mind; for, as yet there was no human hand upon him. The soul of man is that part of him which is capable of the highest happiness, or the most consummate misery. Every outward and bodily affliction will be easily borne when the mind is not affected; for, “the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?”

The words also set forth the *degree* of his mental sufferings, which was inexpressibly great. His soul was not only *sorrowful*, but *exceeding sorrowful*; (*περιλυπος*) the word signifies to be *beset with sorrow round about*, and is well expressed in the Psalms: “The sorrows of

death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." Ps. cxvi. 3. and xviii. 5, 6. A man in great distress of mind may yet have some alleviating circumstances to reflect upon: some lucid opening to alleviate his sorrow; but Christ's soul was now shut up with grief on every side, so that there was no evasion for him. Turn which way he would, nothing but the bitter cup presented itself; and, whilst his soul was wrought up to the most extensive and awful apprehensions of it, he had no ground to hope that it would pass from him except he drank it. His soul was not only besieged round about with sorrow, but sorrowful *even unto death*. It was a *deadly* sorrow, the *sorrows of death*, the *pains of hell*, which must inevitably issue in death, the wages of sin. It was that sorrow which at last killed him, before the tortures of the cross could have done it. He is said to be "*sore amazed and very heavy*," Mark xiv. 33. which sets forth the highest degree of fear, consternation, and astonishment. This we may well conceive to have arisen from his clear apprehensions of the evil and demerit of sin, of the infinite opposition of the divine holiness and justice unto it, and of the power of divine wrath as the curse threatened against it, which he now saw collected, and ready to be poured out upon him as the devoted victim; for, "The Lord made to meet upon him the iniquities of us all," Isa. liii. 6. In the full view of this, no wonder his human soul was filled with sore amazement, and the most dreadful consternation and fear.—He is said to be in an *agony*, Luke xxii. 44. An *agony* (*αγωνία*) is the conflict, wrestling, or striving of nature in a state of extremity. The Lord was now bruising his inmost soul, and putting him to grief. He was inflicting upon him all that was due to the sins of those whom he represented; and with this his soul had

to grapple and struggle in the utmost extremity of the sharpest conflict. So great was this conflict or agony of his mind, that it produced the most wonderful effect even upon his body; for we are told that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."—A sweat in the open air and cold damp of night, when those within doors needed coals to warm them, Luke xxii. 55. must surely have been the effect of great agony; what then must his agony have been which induced a sweat of blood, and expelled it not only through the pores of his body, but even through his clothes, and that with such profusion as to fall down in great drops or clots to the ground!

2. His deadly sorrow, his amazement, and the agony of his soul, may likewise be seen in the *prayers and supplications* which he offered up on that occasion: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt—O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done," Matt. xxvi. 39, 42,—Mark hath it, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt," chap. xiv. 36.—In Luke the words are, "Father if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done," ch. xxii. 42. This was his "offering up prayers and supplications, to him that was able to save him from death; and this prayer he repeats thrice with increasing earnestness, first kneeling; and afterwards falling prostrate on his face; and it is likely that it was these supplications which were accompanied with the *tears* mentioned by the apostle. Now, when we consider that Christ had engaged to drink that cup, that he came into the world for that purpose, as he

acknowledges, John xviii. 37.—to give his life a ransom for many,—to do his Father's will in offering his body, and laying down his life for the sheep, Heb. x. 10. John x. 17, 18. when we think that he foresaw this cup all along, and reached forward towards it, being straitened till it was accomplished, Luke xii. 50. how shall we account for such earnest prayers that it may pass away from him, but from the peculiarity and inexpressible greatness of his sufferings? Shall we think him possessed of less fortitude, patience and resolution, than many who have suffered for his sake, and who have been enabled by his strength to meet death in all its forms with triumph and joy? To suppose this would be as absurd as blasphemous; and therefore, the only reason that can be assigned is, that the nature and degree of his sufferings were peculiar to himself.

3. The intense sufferings of his soul also appear from his *strong crying* upon the cross. We are told that “about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” Matt. xxvii. 46. Before this we have an account of the barbarous and cruel treatment of his body. His murderers spat in his face, buffeted, smote him with their hands, scourged him, arrayed him in mock majesty, and crowned him with thorns. They then stript him naked, and fastened him to the cross, by nails driven through his hands and feet, whereon he had now hung three hours; yet, however ignominious and excruciating all this treatment was, he bore it with the greatest patience, “and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth,” Isa. liii. 7. He feared not him that could only kill the body. It was the sufferings of his soul that extorted from him that mournful and loud cry, “My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken

me?" O what a strange and astonishing cry is this, coming from the mouth of the beloved Son of God! He had been forsaken of his countrymen, of his friends, of his disciples, one of whom betrayed and another denied him, but now he complains he is forsaken of his God and Father! In all his former sufferings and trials in this world, he had always his God and Father to go to for relief and comfort. He was not alone, but the Father was with him to support and strengthen him; and while this was the case he could well bear every affliction; even in the garden an angel was sent to strengthen him. But now, in the time of his greatest need, when forsaken by his friends, surrounded by his enemies, his body in tortures, his soul in agony, and the king of terrors fast advancing; in this his utmost extremity to be forsaken of his God, his Father, his chiefest joy, and only support—this, this, was the very summit of his sufferings, and which crowned all the rest. It becomes not us curiously to enquire in what sense the Father forsook him; but it is evident that he was so forsaken for a time, as to be delivered up to the will of his enemies—to feel the whole weight of his sufferings both in soul and body, and that without any sensible support, or cheering ray of his Father's countenance to mitigate his anguish; so that to the apprehension of his humanity, his God had forsaken him. The sense of his Father's favour, which was better to him than life, seems entirely withdrawn from his soul; whilst he felt to the utmost his displeasure against sin, which was worse to him than death. It was this which melted his heart like wax in the midst of his bowels, Ps. xxii. 14. Well might the heavens be clad in blackness, the earth tremble, and the rocks rend, on such an occasion as this!

4. When we consider the peculiar circumstances in

which he stood, the degree of his sufferings must have been beyond all description, or even conception. For,

He stood not as a private or single person, but as the *public representative* of all the elect from the beginning to the end of time, even as they were at first represented by Adam, Rom. v. 17—21. Moreover,

He represented them not as innocent, but as *sinners*, rebels and enemies against God, Rom. v. 6, 8. As having all gone astray like lost sheep, Isa. liii. 6.

Again, He stood responsible to God's infinite justice and holy law for all their sins, and had come under obligation to make full satisfaction for them. "I come (says he) to do thy will," Ps. xl. He undertook to make reconciliation for the sins of the people—to give his life a ransom for all. The Lord therefore caused to meet upon him the iniquity of us all, Isa. liii. The whole guilt of all the elect was collected and concentrated in him, and all the punishment due to this enormous guilt poured out upon his single person; for he his *own self* bare our sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Thus one died for all, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

Lastly, the punishment of sin is the curse of the law, the wrath of Almighty God; and who knows the power of this wrath? Ps. xc. But this is what the Saviour suffered; for he was made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the divine law, Gal. iii. 10—13.

Having offered some considerations on the exceeding greatness of our Lord's mental sufferings, in the garden and upon the cross, as they appear from the accounts given by the evangelists—from his own words—from his prayers and supplications—from his strong crying and tears—and from the public character in which he stood, as the representative of the guilty, and the substituted

victim for their sins: let us now consider some of the ingredients which composed the bitter cup of these sufferings.

1. It is evident that one ingredient was *fear*.—He is said to “be *sore amazed* and *very heavy*,” Mark xiv. 33. This sets forth the highest degree of fear, consternation, and horror of soul; and, in Heb. v. 7. the apostle says, “he was heard in that he *feared*.” Fear, we know, when raised to the highest pitch in the human soul, is one of the most tormenting passions that we can conceive. “Fear,” saith John, “hath torment,” 1 John iv. 18. It has often unhinged the human frame and produced death. But there is no fear equal to that which arises from an apprehension of the wrath of Almighty God against sin. It is called “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation;” “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Heb. x. 27—31. Now, the soul of Jesus must have been filled with this fear; for, though he was conscious of no personal sins of his own, yet he knew he was the substitute of the guilty, responsible for their sins, and the devoted victim to bear the punishment due to them. He was fully apprized of the awful situation in which he stood; and this, of necessity, must have awakened his fear in proportion. Men’s fears of the divine displeasure are greatly blunted by their insensibility to their situation, their slight view of sin, and their ignorance of God and themselves. But this was not the case with Jesus; he had the clearest views of the extent of the divine law—of the evil and demerit of sin—the enormous accumulated load of them, for which he was responsible—the infinite opposition of the divine holiness unto it—and the dreadful power of God’s wrath threatened against it, which he now saw ready to be poured out upon himself. So that he was fully awake to his situation; every dreadful circum-

stance of it lay open to his view in its full extent. No wonder, then, that his soul was seized with sore amazement, consternation, and fear, when the dreadful sword of divine vengeance was called to awake against him, and smite him; and when it was now brandishing full in his view. No wonder that he prayed earnestly and with tears, "O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

2. Another ingredient in his sufferings was *grief* or *sorrow*. "My soul," says he, "is exceeding sorrowful," (*περιλυπος* beset round about with grief or sorrow) "even unto death," Matt. xxvi. 38. His sorrow was mortal, deadly sorrow; he felt it to such a degree, that he knew it would kill him; and so he says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me," Ps. cxvi. 3. and xviii. 5, 6. This sorrow is also expressed by his being in *agony*, Luke xxii. 44. which signifies the dreadful struggle and conflict of his soul under it. We say a person is in the agony of death when nature is grappling or struggling with it in the last extremity. We cannot, indeed, have a distinct apprehension of the nature of the Saviour's sorrow; but, as his soul was the seat of it, it must have been excited by the ideas which were then present to his mind. What these were, we cannot precisely say; but, when we consider that he stood as the representative and substitute of the guilty, and that his soul was made an offering for their sins, we may safely admit, that all that grief, sorrow, and anguish of spirit which was due to his guilty people, on account of their sins, was now excited and concentrated in the soul of Jesus, excepting despair, or any thing that would imply personal sin. The scripture expressly says, that "he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows," Isa. liii. 3, 4. those very griefs and sorrows which belonged to us on account of our own sins, were

transferred to him, and he bore or suffered them, when wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; for the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquities of us all, ver. 5, 6. If we only consider his infinite *love* to his heavenly Father, what distress must he not feel at the dishonour done him by sin? “*Rivers of waters,*” says the Psalmist, “run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law,” *Psa. cxix. 136.* How much more must not this have been the case with Christ! Especially too, as he now personated these transgressors, and found himself responsible for all their rebellion against the object of his supreme love, so that it behoved him to look upon their sins as if they were his own. Must not the emotions and feelings of his soul in this predicament, be answerable to what he expresses? *Ps. xl. 12.* “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.” Let us also think of the perfect *hatred* and *detestation* which his holy soul bore to sin; and then, consider, what must have been his feelings when the whole accumulated load of his people’s sins, in all their number, aggravation, and deformity, stood forth to his view, as a debt for which he was responsible. In fine, let us consider that it was God that bruised him and put him to grief as the righteous judge and avenger of sin. He was in the hands of the living God, who has access unto the spirit of man, and who can open there every avenue of grief, and awaken such intense sensibility, as is to us inconceivable; for who knows the power of his anger? Let it suffice us to say, that he spared him not, but bruised him and put him to grief—to all that grief which was necessary for the full display of his infinite opposition to sin. So that our Lord might well adopt the language of Jerusalem in distress, “Behold and see, if

there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger," Lam. i. 12,

3. Another ingredient was his being *forsaken* of his God. This he complains of in his loud cry upon the cross, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46. What an astonishing sentence is this, coming from the mouth of the beloved Son of God! More could not have been suffered or been said; every word carries in it an accent of horror! We cannot, indeed, explain how his God forsook him; but it is evident that he was so forsaken for a time, as to be given up to the will of his enemies; perhaps his invisible as well as visible enemies, for now was their hour and the power of darkness, Luke xxii. 53. He was permitted to feel the whole weight of his sufferings, both in soul and body, and that, without any sensible support, or one cheering ray of his Father's countenance to mitigate his anguish. He felt himself, as it were, given up and left alone. The sense of his Father's favour, which was better to him than life, was for a time entirely withdrawn from his soul; so that, to his apprehension at least, his God had forsaken him. To be forsaken of his God and Father, his supreme delight, his chief joy, and only resource and support; and that too, in his greatest need, when surrounded by his enemies—his body in torture—his soul in agony—and death fast advancing: this, surely, was the very summit of his sufferings, and which crowned all the rest. It was this that melted his heart like wax in the midst of his bowels, Ps. xxii. 14. In all this, however, we are not to imagine that he was in despair. He still calls upon God as *his* God, and knew that he would not utterly forsake him. And, indeed, this dreadful hour was soon over, for his very next cry

was a shout of victory, declaring that IT WAS FINISHED, when he delivered up his spirit into the hands of his Father, John xix. 30.

There are two things in the sufferings of Christ, which, perhaps, may embarrass the minds of some persons.

It may be asked, how he could be so much depressed with sufferings, and complain that his God had forsaken him, since he himself was the Mighty God. But to this we answer, that, though he was God and man in one person, yet his whole person could not suffer. It was only in that nature wherein he was one with his brethren that he suffered, and this was one great end of his taking that nature upon him; see Heb. ii. 9—14. chap. x. 5—10. True, indeed, it was God's Son *himself* that suffered; it was the *blood of God* that was shed; but still it was the blood of his humanity which was himself by virtue of its personal union with him. Again, it was the Divine dignity of his person that gave infinite value and efficacy to his sufferings as an adequate atonement for the sins of all his brethren, in which God is for ever well pleased. But then, we are not to imagine that the personal union of his two natures changed the essential properties of each; for this would make him to be neither God nor man in a proper sense. If, therefore, he was truly man, he must necessarily have been capable of all the sinless weaknesses and sufferings of a man, as the apostle declares, Heb. ii. 17, 18. chap. iv. 15. If, therefore, he was to suffer all that was due to the sins of his brethren, we are not to think that his Divine nature would interpose to prevent these sufferings, since this would frustrate the end of his coming into the world; neither must we even suppose that his Godhead would so support him under

them, as to prevent his feeling them in their full degree ; for what is not felt cannot be called sufferings. If Jesus must suffer what was due unto us, he must be left to all that weakness of humanity which was susceptible of suffering. And so we are told, *he was crucified through weakness*, which weakness is opposed to the *power of God* by which he now liveth, 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

Another difficulty is, how to reconcile his reluctance to drink the cup, which is repeatedly expressed in his prayers that it might pass from him, with his voluntary laying down of his life ; for he says, “ No man taketh my life from me ; but I lay it down of myself,” John x. 18. For reconciling this we may observe the following things.

1. That aversion from suffering is an essential and innocent affection of human nature, and indeed of every living creature. As God hath originally implanted in us the love of happiness, so also has he an aversion to misery and suffering. Without this we could neither have hope nor fear, love nor aversion. If we did not love happiness, we could not be happy ; if we were not averse from sufferings, we could not suffer. In short, we should be altogether incapable of happiness or misery, of love or aversion, of hope or fear. Jesus had a real human nature, and, therefore, must have had all the essential and innocent affections, and feelings of a man, with respect to happiness or misery. No real affliction, as such, could seem to him more than to us, to be *joyous* but *grievous*, otherwise, it would be no affliction at all ; for what is joyous, cannot at the same time be afflicting. The repugnance of his nature to that dreadful cup was therefore perfectly innocent. But, this is not all, for,

2. It demonstrates the perfection of his love to his heavenly Father. If we only consider the nature of

that cup, that it was no less than the wrath of God, or the cursed death due to sin, we must admit that, in proportion as he esteemed his Father's love, in the same proportion must he have been averse to his displeasure. The more holy and innocent a soul is, the more fervently will it love the Divine favour and the sense of it; and, consequently, it will have the greater aversion from his wrath and displeasure. When, therefore, Christ expresses his reluctance to drink that cup, saying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," he is thereby expressing his great love to the light of his Father's countenance as his only happiness.

3. If he had not entertained such a reluctancy in his holy soul to this cup, he could not have been so great a sufferer as he was in drinking it. If he was to suffer to the utmost for our sins, he must have all that repugnancy in his nature to it, which was necessary to raise his sufferings to their due height, and make him feel their full weight.

4. His great aversion from that cup, contributed to the perfection of his obedience: it put it to the fullest trial, and gave occasion for its highest exercise. When every thing in the way of duty is agreeable and pleasant to ourselves, there is no proper trial of our subjection to the will of God; but, when the line of duty lies through fire and water,—when it leads us to the greatest self-denial, and requires that we should encounter things most repugnant to our nature—to obey in such a case, shows the highest subjection to the will of God. This was the case with Jesus; nothing was so much the object of his aversion as this cup, sin excepted; and, this aversion led him to desire that it might pass from him if possible. This innocent and unavoidable desire of nature, to avoid distress, he calls *his own will*;—

but notwithstanding all his aversion to the cup considered in itself, yet when he considers it as given to him of his Father, and that it was his will he should drink it, he is all submission; “Nevertheless,” says he, “not my will, but thine be done.” Even in praying that the cup might pass from him, he does it upon this express condition—“*if thou be willing*, remove this cup from me.” He would not have it removed, however bitter it was, unless his Father was willing. Again he says, “*if it be possible*, let this cup pass from me.” In one view, it was indeed possible; for God was able to exempt his Son from suffering; but the meaning is, “If it can possibly consist with thy glory in the salvation of my brethren.” He had no desire that the cup should pass from him upon any other terms. He would rather drink it to the last dreg, however great his aversion to it, than be exempted from it at the least expence of his Father’s honour, or his people’s happiness. When the anguish of his soul led him to pray, “Father, save me from this hour,” he immediately adds, “but for this cause came I unto this hour. *Father, glorify thy name.*” We see then, that in all his prayers, that the cup might pass from him, the *will* of his Father, and the *glory of his name* in the *salvation* of his people, was what he had supremely at heart. In these prayers he expressed the perfection of that love which was required in the law, and which was indeed the fulfilling of it. This love was obedience, as it carried in it the most perfect *submission* to the Divine will. His aversion to the cup, and the greatness of his sufferings in drinking it, gave occasion to the highest instance of the *subjection* of his will to the will of the Father, and which, in other circumstances, could not have been drawn forth into full exercise. This was the highest

instance of obedience that ever appeared in the world, and which has no parallel in all the creation of God. Especially too, if we consider the infinite dignity of the person that thus obeyed—God's own Son, who was not originally under the law, and even as a man, was under no obligation to suffer on his own account, being without sin. This obedience, therefore, must be of *infinite worth*, it must have been *voluntary*, and include in it the highest *condescension* in respect to us. From the whole then, we may see the propriety and force of what the apostle says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

5. Though Jesus would not be exempted from drinking that cup, unless his Father were willing; yet still he insists for salvation from it, when he had drank it in obedience to him. "O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." This imports a desire that the Father's will may be done in his drinking the cup, and that it may then pass away from him. In this prayer he offers to his Father his *sufferings* in drinking that cup, which were the pains or sorrows of that death which was due to the sins of his people. And also, the perfection of that *obedience*, which was occasioned by the things which he suffered—*thy will be done*. He also presents himself before him as his *Son*, thus suffering and obeying, for his words are, *O, my Father*. Thus he prays to his Father who was *able to save him from death*, when he thus suffered it; and the apostle tells us, he *was heard*. He was heard on account of the perfection of his obedience in the extremity of the sorrows of death; for when he had thus offered himself without spot, the Father raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible he should be holden of it,

Acts ii. 24. and bestowed upon him eternal life, suitable to the infinite merit of his obedience, Philip. ii. 9—12. And this deliverance from death, and glorious life from the dead, which he obtained as the answer of his prayers, is the salvation of all his people. So that, in his being heard, “and being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.”

It now only remains to consider what are the inferences which are fairly deducible from the subject. And,

1. From the doctrine of Christ's sufferings, we may learn the inseparable connection betwixt *sin* and its wages, viz. *death*. When Satan the father of lies tempted our first parents to sin, he did it by separating sin from its punishment, saying, “Ye shall not surely die;” but sad experience has demonstrated the falsehood of this, for death entered by sin, Rom. v. 12. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Still, however, men flatter themselves with impunity in sin, with regard to the wrath to come; they think it inconsistent with God's goodness and justice to inflict so great a punishment for such small offences. But whatever men may think, God hath declared that he will in no wise clear the guilty; and the sufferings of Christ demonstrate this in the clearest manner. If in any case sin and death could have been separated—if it had been any way possible for sin to pass without being punished with the wrath of God, surely it must have been when the Son of God himself, standing for his sinful people, was crying to his Father with tears to be saved from suffering his wrath due to their sins. But even in this case it was

not possible; it was not the will of his Father, nor consistent with the salvation of his people from death. In no other case then, can sin pass unpunished by the most penitent prayers and supplications. All therefore, who think to appease God and avert his wrath by these will find themselves miserably mistaken. Can they possibly imagine that their prayers will have more weight with God than those of his own Son? It is impossible that the curse threatened against sin should fall to the ground. The curse must of necessity light either on the sinner himself, or on a substitute.

2. In Christ's sufferings we see the infinite *evil of sin*, and its hatefulness in the sight of God. It was sin that turned angels of light into devils, and hurled them down from the seats of bliss into endless misery. It was sin that ruined man, drove him out of Paradise, and introduced misery and death among the whole human race. It is against sin that the wrath of God has in all ages been revealed from heaven, Rom. i. 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." We see it in the signal and awful judgments which have been inflicted upon transgressors. We are further assured, that all these are but preludes to that endless wrath which men by their sins are treasuring up to themselves against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God in the world to come, Rom. ii. 5. But in none of these instances, nor in all of them put together, does the evil of sin, or the divine opposition to it appear in such a striking light, as in the sufferings of the Son of God. Especially when we consider his *divine dignity*, being *over all, God* blessed for ever, and so of infinitely more worth than all the creatures which he himself hath made.

His *relation* to the Father: his *Son*, his *only begotten Son*, and his being the object of his Father's *supreme love*; his *well-beloved Son*, the Son of his *love*, in whom his *soul delighted*. Surely when such a person interposed, and stood in the room of the guilty, we might naturally think that he would be spared. But was this the case? No; neither *his dignity*, his *relation* to him, nor his *deariness* to him, could in the least prevail to stop or mitigate the claims of vindictive justice against sin, till it was fully satiated by his drinking the bitter cup to the very last dreg. This sets forth God's opposition to sin in a stronger light than all the torments of devils, or than if all the human race had everlastingly suffered for their own sins. Let us therefore from hence learn the evil of sin. We are apt to have too slight views of it. We are sinners ourselves; it has hold of our hearts and affections. Not indeed as an *abstract idea*, or considered *in itself*, but in the quality of our affections themselves, and their attachment to unsuitable objects. Self-love makes us in a great measure blind to our own sins, and disposes us at least to mitigate them. It even persuades us that God looks upon them in the same favourable light, and will not punish them. But if we would have just apprehensions of the evil of sin, and its demerit—how God (who views things in their true light) looks upon it, and hates it; let us consider what Christ suffered in order to expiate it.

3. In Christ's sufferings we perceive how sin is punished to the utmost, and yet the sinner saved. Though there is no loosing the connection between sin and death; yet infinite wisdom hath found out a method to free the sinner from the obligation to punishment, not by dispensing with it, but by transferring it from the person of the sinner to the person of God's own Son,

and so punishing him for the sins of the guilty. "Thus he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 22.—"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3.—"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed;" Isa. liii. 5.—"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," 1 Pet. iii. 18.—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed," chap. ii. 24. And as it was impossible that both he and his people should suffer for the same sins, the consequence is, that they are freed from the punishment and curse due to their sins by his being made a curse for them. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," Gal. iii. 19.—they are healed by his stripes, Isa. liii. 13.—"they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7.—"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. Thus God, in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation hath declared his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that is of the faith of Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26.

4. In the sufferings of Christ, there is the highest

manifestation of the *love of God* to guilty sinners. As nothing can give so striking a view of the divine *hatred of sin* as the sufferings of his Son; so nothing can give such an amazing display of his *love and grace* towards the *sinner*. The scripture always points to this as the highest expression of it, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.—"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Eph. v. 2. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 16. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." ch. iv. 9. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." ver. 10. And as this is the greatest expression of his love, it assures us of every blessing: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

5. Christ's death is not to be considered merely as sufferings, but as *obedience*; for he *laid down* his life for the sheep at the *commandment* of the Father, John x. 17, 18.—he became *obedient* unto death, Phil. ii. 8.—he learned *obedience* by the things which he suffered, Heb. v. 8. It was for this obedience the Father loved him, John x. 17. and rewarded him, Phil. ii. 9. and this is that *one righteousness*—that *obedience* of one whereby

his many brethren are made righteous, Rom. v. 18, 19. It is therefore not only the procuring cause of the pardon of sin, but of eternal life and happiness, in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

6. In the sufferings of Christ, sinners may find a complete and sovereign remedy for all the fears and distress of a guilty conscience. You are conscious you have rebelled against God—you see your sins to be numberless in multitude, and enormous in magnitude—you hear the divine law denouncing a curse upon every transgression, and find that, yourself, are the person against whom it is pointed—you are filled with dreadful apprehensions of divine wrath, and know that nothing but the precarious and brittle thread of life, suspends you over the bottomless abyss of endless misery. You can never indeed, have too strong or affecting views of these things. Your sense of guilt can never exceed the danger to which sin exposes you. But here is a remedy for all your guilt and fears. Behold the Son of God enduring the punishment of sin, the Just one suffering the wrath of God for the unjust, that such as you are might be set free. Turn your eyes to this amazing sight—see the amazement, the sorrows, and the agony of his soul—look to him suspended and tortured on the cross bearing the curse—hear his astonishing cry, that his God had forsaken him—behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his. You dread the punishment of sin; see him bearing it, and bearing it for such as you, the chief of sinners—look to him again in this view, and be enlightened. Remember he is held forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare God's righteousness for the remission of sins, and that he might be just in justifying such ungodly sinners as you, believing in Jesus. Remember that God requires nothing of you

to appease his wrath. Christ hath done all that was necessary to this ; and God is already well pleased in him, and demands no more. If you believe this you must experience immediate relief. Your view of guilt will not be lessened but enlarged, when you see what the Son of God suffered on your account. This, while it removes the *fear of wrath*, and fills your soul with *joy* and *gratitude*, will at the same time awaken a new kind of *sorrow* and *contrition* which you never felt before ; for now you will look upon him whom you have pierced, and mourn *for him* as for an only son, and be in bitterness *for him* as for a first-born, Zech. xii. 10. The view of Christ suffering for our sins is the only effectual motive to true repentance and godly sorrow for sin. It wounds the conscience with ingenuous remorse, melts the heart into tenderness, and opens up all the flood-gates of the soul in penitential grief and kindly contrition, for having basely pierced him who loved us so as to lay down his life for us. Let us see if it has this effect upon us when conscious of guilt. Are we in bitterness *for him* ?

7. The sufferings of Christ afford the strongest motives to holiness of heart and life. 1. *To love God*. “ We love God because he first loved us,” 1 John iv. 19. If love be the most powerful motive to love, where can we see such an instance of it as in this ? The apostle, who felt the strong influence of this love, says, “ If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.” Our Lord who best knew the extent of his own love, declares that if a man love any thing whatever, yea life itself, more than him, he was not worthy of him. His love demands our whole heart in return, and it is but a poor return after all. 2. *To love one another* : “ A new commandment I give unto

you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," John xiii. 34. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. 3. To *live to him* that died for us; this is the end of his death, and his love should constrain us to it, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, than were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Besides, we are the purchase of his blood, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus ii. 14. "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 17—19. 4. It leads us to be *crucified* to the world, and to sin: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. vi. 14. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be

destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," Rom. vi. 6.—and to our own righteousness by the works of the law, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii. 19—21. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death," Philip. iii. 7—10. 5. To *take up the cross* and follow him in sufferings; "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps," 1 Pet. ii. 21. "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," chap. iii. 17, 18. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin," chap. iv. 1, 2. See how the apostles were conformed to him in this, and exhibited his life under sufferings: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair. So then death worketh in us, but life in you," 2 Cor. iv. 8—12. 6. To *patience* under sufferings, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand

of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 2, 3.

8. From Christ's sufferings we may learn the *unavoidable condemnation* of all who have not an interest in his death, or who believe not the gospel. We have seen that sin and its punishment are inseparable; for, when the Son of God stood in the room of the guilty, it was impossible that the cup could pass even from him. There was no separating punishment from the person of the sinner, but by transferring it to him who alone was able to make satisfaction. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins," Heb. x. 26. Those, therefore, who despise or reject this one sacrifice, in which God is well pleased, must unavoidably bear the punishment of their own sins, and that for ever, because they can never make satisfaction. Let them think on what the Son of God endured, and consider, if these things were done on the green tree, what shall be done on the dry. Let them see from this that all their attempts to please God, without an interest in Christ's sacrifice, are utterly vain.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH,
WITHOUT THE DEEDS OF THE LAW.



ROM. iii. 20—23.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin; but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.—VERSE 28. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

CHAP. iv. 4, 5. *Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

AN attentive observer of the existing state of the Christian profession in this country, cannot fail to be struck both with surprise and concern at the great variety of sects, and the still greater diversity of sentiments, into

which it is unhappily divided. When he reflects that truth is one, and that it is uniformly consistent with itself, the inference is as painful as it is certain, that the far greater part of those existing differences must be resolved into the influence of error, taking its rise either about the doctrines of the gospel, or the line of obedience which revelation inculcates.

A mind accustomed to reflection, and which can trace effects back to their causes, will naturally enquire whether there be not some fundamental first principles which, being misapprehended and mistaken, must have given rise to these various deviations and departures from the way of truth; and the more closely he pursues his enquiries, the more strongly impressed with the conviction will he probably be, that an erroneous view of the doctrine of justification, or of a sinner's acceptance with God, is the central point or radical principle from which much of the unscriptural and false religion that abounds in the world dates its origin.

This has certainly been the judgment formed of the matter by many of the ablest writers in every age of the church; and it is confirmed by the decisions of time and experience. Luther, the great reformer, used to say, that the doctrine of the justification of the ungodly by faith without the deeds of the law, reigned in his heart; and he pronounced it "the article on which the church stood or fell." The celebrated Witsius was evidently of the same mind; for according to his view of the matter, the doctrine of justification by grace spreads itself through the whole system of divinity, diffusing its influence throughout every part of it; and as that doctrine is either solidly established, or superficially touched—fully stated or slightly dismissed—accordingly the whole structure of religion either rises graceful and

magnificent, superior to assault and beyond the power of decay ; or else it appears disproportionate and defective, totters on its foundation, and threatens an opprobrious fall.

But, indeed, we have much higher authority for maintaining the importance of this doctrine than that of either Luther or Witsius. We need only to look into the writings of the great apostle of the Gentiles, particularly into his epistles to the churches of Galatia and Rome, to find this view of the matter fully confirmed by the Spirit of inspiration. It is the great subject on which the apostle dwells in the chapters out of which I have selected the words of the text, and to which therefore our attention will now be directed. To illustrate the doctrine, I shall

I. Offer a few remarks by way of explaining the terms *law*, and *deeds* of the law.

II. Consider the grounds on which the apostle declares that a sinner cannot be justified by the deeds of the law.

III. Examine the apostle's doctrine of the justification of the ungodly ; and in doing this we shall begin with noticing some things which are opposed to justification by faith. And,

IV. Enquire what peculiar suitableness there is in faith for obtaining this blessing.

1. The *law* here intended is not merely the Jewish ceremonial and judicial law ; but the moral law which binds all mankind. It is that law by which is the knowledge of sin, ver. 20. which says " thou shalt not covet," chap. vii. 7.—the law which forbids the various sins enumerated in this and the two foregoing chapters,

and by which the Gentiles as well as Jews stood condemned. From all which it is evident that it is the moral law.

2. The *deeds* of this law must be obedience to it in heart and life. This law requires not only *outward* deeds or actions, but also an *inward* conformity of heart. Its great principle is love to God and our neighbour, and every holy disposition of heart, as well as correspondent actions in life; and so the apostle enumerates heart sins, as well as wicked actions, as breaches of it. Both inward and outward conformity to the law are therefore included in the deeds of the law, and here excluded from justification.

3. The premises from which the apostle draws his conclusion, “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” are two-fold, because the conclusion is double. 1. He concludes that a man is not justified *by the works of the law*, from the proofs he has adduced that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, ver. 9. that all the world is become guilty before God, ver. 19. all having sinned and come short of his glory, ver. 23. and that the law cannot justify sinners, but serves only to give the knowledge of sin, and the condemnation due to it, ver. 20. From these premises the conclusion unavoidably follows, that a man is not justified by the deeds of the law; so that if he is justified at all it must be without them; they have no part in it. 2. He concludes that a man is *justified by faith only*, from the testimony of the law and the prophets, ver. 21. *i. e.* by all the promises respecting this in the Old Testament, the sense of which is now manifested or clearly laid open in the gospel; and also from what the gospel itself declares concerning the method of justification, which is *freely* by God’s grace, through the *redemption*

that is in Jesus Christ, as a *propitiation* for sin, for the declaration of God's righteousness in the *remission* of it; and obtained *through faith* in his blood. So that in this way God is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus, ver. 21—27. From all which he concludes, that a man is justified only by faith, as opposed to works.

Having offered these preliminary remarks, by way of ascertaining the import of the terms, law, and deeds of the law, we shall now proceed to shew more particularly,

II. The grounds on which the apostle founds his assertion, that, by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in the sight of God.

1. It is here affirmed, as it had been before proved, that *all have sinned*, *i. e.* violated or transgressed the divine law, for sin is the transgression of the law, 1 John iii. 4. and where no law is there is no transgression, Rom. iv. 15. The law, whether natural or revealed, requires perfect love to God and our neighbour. Sin must therefore be the opposite of this. “By one man sin entered into the world,” Rom. v. 12. This was the original introduction of all the sin and depravity of the human race. But our text speaks of personal guilt, which consists both in the natural depravity of our hearts, and the actual transgressions of our lives. In our first birth we are shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, Ps. li. 5. The scripture declares that the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 7.—that men are alienated from God through the ignorance that is in them, Eph. iv. 18.—enemies to God in their minds, and by wicked works, Col. i. 21.—hateful and hating one another, Tit. iii. 3.—That the course of this world is to fulfil the

desires of the flesh and of the mind, as instigated by the prince of the power of the air, Eph. ii. 1, 2. The history of mankind from the beginning of the world demonstrates this great truth.

2. Another thing here affirmed is, that all have *come short of the glory of God*. This is a necessary consequence of having sinned; for sin being a rebellion against God, and opposite to his nature and government, must necessarily forfeit his favour, and incur his displeasure. Accordingly his wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, Rom. i. 18. and his law denounceth a curse upon every one that continueth not in all things, written therein, Gal. iii. 10. To have come short of the glory of God imports, (1.) That we have come short of the divine approbation, and cannot stand justified or accepted in his sight, Ps. cxxx. 3. Rom. iii. 20.—(2.) That we have forfeited everlasting happiness in the enjoyment of God, which is termed his glory, ch. v. 2.—(3.) That we have become liable to the judgment or vengeance of God, ver. 19. ch. ii. 8, 9. and that not only with regard to the miseries of this life, and death itself, but also to be punished with everlasting misery in the world to come, which is the second death.

3. We may notice also the *universality* of the expression. “ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The Jew might be apt to plead an exemption, as every one is ready to do in his own favour; but the word *all* is intended to include the Jews as well as Gentiles, for addressing them he says, “Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin,” ver. 9. Not one of all the human race is exempted. When the Lord looked down from heaven to survey the children of men,

he passed this verdict on them all; "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one," ver. 12. Some may have been more regular in their lives, and better members of society than others; but the comparative goodness of one man above another is of no avail here; for the best have sinned, and consequently come short of the glory of God. And all are equally unable to do any thing, either to regain or retain the divine favour; they can neither make satisfaction for past sins, nor obey perfectly for the time to come. So that man's state by nature is not only *sinful* and *miserable*, but *hopeless* and *irretrievable* as to any thing he can do for his own relief.

Though taken abstractly by themselves, these things exhibit nothing but a ground of absolute despair to the whole human race; yet in the connection wherein they stand with the foregoing and succeeding verses, they must have a very different effect; for while on the one hand, they serve to convince of sin and its desert—to stop every mouth from all self-justifying pleas, ver. 19.—to cut off all hopes of life by the law, Rom. vii. 9. and every attempt to establish our own righteousness; so on the other hand, they serve to recommend the righteousness of God without the law, which is manifested in the gospel, and witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. This righteousness, he says, is unto *all*, and upon *all* them that believe, without exception of Jew or Gentile; *for*, he adds, *there is no difference*; and in our text he gives the reason why there is no difference, *viz.* "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." As there is no difference among mankind as to their state of guilt and

condemnation: no difference as to their inability to obtain justification by the works of the law: it follows that there can be no difference as to the way in which they obtain justification. It must be *freely* by God's *grace*, through the *redemption* that is in Jesus Christ, and extend *unto all*, and be bestowed *upon all* them that believe. For as no righteousness in the character of any one can entitle him to this justification, there being none righteous, no not one; so no guilt or unworthiness can exclude him from it believing in Jesus, it being the justification of the ungodly, purely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in his Son, and not on account of any thing in them less or more to distinguish them from the rest of fallen mankind. We now proceed,

III. To examine the apostle's doctrine of the justification of the ungodly by faith, without the deeds of the law. And that we may enter more fully into the apostle's doctrine on this head, we shall consider what is opposed to justification by faith—the character of such as obtain justification—the faith by which they obtain it—and how that faith is counted to them for righteousness, or justification.

1. To illustrate free justification the more clearly the apostle states what is opposed to it. “Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt.” This imports,

(1.) That if any should so work as to obey the whole law perfectly, then *grace* would have no place in his justification; he is righteous by works, and so might claim acceptance and the reward of his work upon the footing of justice as a *debt* due to him from God; and that notwithstanding God had supported and enabled him to work, as all live and have their being in him,

But I am of opinion the case supposed is not perfect obedience to the law, but a seeking to be justified by it, which the apostle calls being justified by the law, Gal. v. 4. and therefore,

(2.) *Him that worketh*, is he who is endeavouring to do the best he can in order to be accepted of God for his works, like the Pharisees and many others. Now were such a person to obtain a reward for his sincere endeavours, it could not be reckoned of grace, nor could he himself look upon it in that light, though he might acknowledge that God had assisted him, and thank him that he was not as other men are. He would still consider the reward as a debt due to his work; and indeed it would be so in reality, if God had stipulated a reward to such works; it might be claimed as a pactional debt due to them. Whatever then comes under the idea of *working* of any kind in order to be justified, is opposed to justification by free *grace*, and is to seek it as a debt. Let us now consider,

2. The *character* of such as obtain justification. They are here described as the *ungodly*. No single word can more strikingly set forth their absolute unworthiness. All the apostle had said of the guilt both of the Jews and Gentiles in the three foregoing chapters, is here summed up in one word, to which nothing can be added,—*the ungodly*. This represents them not only as destitute of every good qualification that might entitle them to justification in a natural way, but as possessed of every thing that is opposite to God and goodness, and which renders them fit objects of his abhorrence and indignation. But can a holy God justify persons of such a character? Yes; he “justifieth the ungodly.” What, before they have undergone a change of heart and life, from sin to holiness? Yes, for otherwise they would not be the *ungodly*. He justifies them not working to attain justification, but believ-

ing in him as justifying the ungodly. Were they not ungodly, they could not be the subjects of justification, which consists chiefly in the remission of sins. Here then is the room for the exercise of sovereign, free, preventing grace, without the least idea of debt arising from the comparative worth of one above another. We shall now consider

3. The *faith* of those who obtain justification. This is held forth in these words, “him that worketh not but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly.” Here we see faith is opposed to all good works, or virtuous exercises of any kind in order to be justified, which would be to seek it not of grace, but as a reward of debt. True indeed, faith itself worketh by love, but it is not as thus working, that it is imputed for righteousness; for it is expressly said, that righteousness is imputed to him that *worketh not but believeth*. Not only are legal works excluded here, but even the effects of faith itself, whether they be good dispositions, exercises of the affections, or actions of the life. No words can more clearly distinguish faith from every self-justifying labour, than to represent it as a *not working but believing*. Justifying faith therefore is simply a *believing*; so it is represented through the whole of the New Testament, and particularly in this chapter, where it is illustrated by the example of Abraham’s faith. But the chief thing to be considered is the *object* of faith in this case, or *what* it is a sinner believes when he *believes unto righteousness* or justification: for here lies the sap and marrow of the whole, and from this faith derives all the virtue and efficacy ascribed to it.

(1.) We are told that Abraham *believed God*, viz. in the promise he had made to him respecting his seed. He believed according to that which was spoken; and so it was counted to him for righteousness. In like

manner he that believeth unto righteousness, believeth on God that justifieth the ungodly. This is more fully expressed afterwards where it is said, "righteousness shall be imputed unto us, if we believed on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," ver. 24, 25. It is therefore to believe God's testimony concerning his Son, that he delivered him up unto death to make an atonement for our offences, and that he raised him again from the dead for our justification. This is to believe that the atonement in Christ's blood is complete and fully satisfactory, and that God in raising him from the dead hath discharged him from all further demands, and demonstrated himself fully well-pleased with what he hath done in behalf of the guilty, and that he can now in a consistency with the strictest justice justify the most ungodly.

(2.) Abraham believed God's word of promise notwithstanding all the natural discouragements that lay in his way. The thing promised was supernatural: his body was dead, and so was Sarah's womb; yet he considered none of these things; but against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken. So he that believes unto righteousness, sees nothing about himself to fit him for being justified in a natural way, but every thing the reverse, every thing that would naturally lead him to despair. But when he believes God's word respecting his supernatural method of justifying sinners by delivering his Son for their offences, and raising him again for their justification, this raises him above all his natural discouragements, and gives him an unshaken ground of hope. He now sees that the obedience of the Son of God is alone sufficient to justify him guilty as he stands, and

that without any labour of his own to qualify himself for it. Thus he believes on him that justifieth the ungodly, and so his faith is counted for righteousness. This leads me,

4. To consider in what sense it is said, *his faith is counted* or reckoned *for righteousness*; an expression which frequently occurs in this chapter, see ver. 3, 5, 9, 22, 23, 24. It is generally explained by Calvinistic divines of the *object* of faith, or *that which is believed*, which is frequently called faith; and it is certain that Christ is made unto us righteousness—that by his obedience many are made righteous, and that he was made a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Nothing is clearer therefore, than that Christ's obedience or atonement is the meritorious ground of a sinner's justification; for we are justified by his blood; but still it is his blood *believed* in; it is *through faith* in his blood, and hence justification is ascribed to faith. Now though the gospel is frequently called *faith* or *the faith*, yet I do not recollect that either Christ or his atonement is ever called *faith*, though both are the objects of it. I do think that through the whole of this chapter, faith is to be understood in its natural and proper sense as a *believing*; and it is plain to me that it was Abraham's *believing God* that was counted to him for righteousness: but then I think the expression means no more than that he was *justified by faith* according as it is commonly expressed, and that the peculiarity of the phrase here is merely to conform to the expression used in Gen. xv. 6. upon which he is commenting. But I think this phrase is well explained by what is said of the faith of those who were cured; Christ says to the woman, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," or hath saved thee, Matt. ix. 22. or to the blind men, "Accord-

ing to your faith be it unto you," ver. 29. and the centurion, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," chap. viii. 13. They believed Christ's *power* to cure them—that power was exerted upon them *according* to their faith; so their faith was *reckoned to them* for healing. "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Before I dismiss the consideration of this part of our subject, I beg leave to add a few remarks on what has now been said; and

1. I remark, That faith does not justify as a *judge*. In this sense it is God alone that justifieth; for who can forgive sins but God only? Neither does it justify as the legal meritorious *procuring cause* of it; for that is the blood of Jesus Christ shed upon the cross, and presented to God in the heavenly sanctuary; and in this sense we are justified by what we believe. But faith justifies, as it *credits God's word* respecting his freely justifying the ungodly through the redemption that is in his Son. So the apostle says, "righteousness shall be imputed to us also, *if we believe* on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," chap. iv. 24, 25. "To him that worketh not, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith* is counted for righteousness," ver. 5. *i. e.* he is actually justified *according to his faith* in God as the justifier of the ungodly through the atonement. Thus our Lord says to the blind men who believed he was able to give them their sight, "according to your faith be it unto you," Matt. ix. 29. Not only the miraculous healing of the body, but also the remission of sins is ascribed unto faith. When Jesus says to Mary, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," he adds, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," Luke vii. 48, 50. Thus faith is (*λογιζεται*)

counted, reckoned, or imputed (εις δικαιοσυνην) unto righteousness or justification.

This faith in its very nature is contrary to all doubting or staggering at God's promise or testimony. The heinousness of unbelief lies in its making or holding God for a liar, 1 John v. 10. than which a more impious or blasphemous thought cannot enter the heart of man; for it undeifies him at once, and holds him no better than an idol, which is called a lying vanity. Yet men's consciences are not so easily struck with the heinousness of this sin as of many others. The reason is obvious; it is because unbelief in its very nature is opposite to a conviction of its guilt. But faith sets to its seal that God is true, John iii. 33. it counts him faithful who hath promised; nay, that it is impossible for him to lie; that he abideth faithful, and cannot deny himself. The stability of the heavens and the earth is nothing in the estimation of faith to the firmness and stability of God's testimony: the heavens may depart, and the earth be removed, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, even the word which by the gospel is preached unto us. We should reckon that man delirious who durst not venture his foot upon this earthly globe lest it should sink under him; yet this is not near so unreasonable as to doubt the stability of God's word; for the earth is but a creature, and is itself upheld by the word of God's power, which he may suspend when he pleaseth without any impeachment of his character. But to doubt his word of promise or testimony is to doubt his power and faithfulness; to doubt, not only the stability of his works, but his own stability, and so to rob him of the whole glory of his nature. But faith gives God the glory that is due to his power, faithfulness, and grace, whilst it credits his *truth*

in what he promises—his *ability* to perform it, and his *grace* as the motive and spring of all. It sees, as the poet well expresses it, that

His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies ;
The voice which rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.

Nay more, it sees that when these skies shall be wrapt together as a scroll—when the stars shall start from their orbits, and the whole frame of nature shall be dissolved, the word of his grace shall stand for ever; because it is the word of the Almighty, the faithful, the unchangeable God, and therefore can never fail.

2. Faith is not staggered at God's promise or testimony from the consideration of our own guilt and unworthiness of such inestimable blessings. Unbelief, upon this head, makes a very humble and plausible appearance; it admits in a great measure the doctrine of our guilt and sinfulness. Many have strong and sharp convictions of sin who have no faith in the gospel; now the use which unbelief makes of such convictions is to set them about some work of reformation in order to make their peace with God, or at least to qualify them for the salvation that is in Christ. But when they cannot find relief in this way, after many struggles, resolutions, and vows, then it leads them to murmur and repine against God in a kind of heartless despair; like Israel of old who said, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" Ezek. xxxiii. 10. They will also acknowledge that there is salvation in Christ, but not for such unworthy creatures as they are: they will expatiate upon the sins and corruptions of their hearts.

and lives, and assign that as the reason why they dare not lay claim to Christ. Or, perhaps, they have heard much about the necessity of faith, and conceiving it to be some laborious exercise of the mind, they strain hard to perform that arduous and mysterious work in order to get an interest in Christ, and make up their connection with him; but after repeated attempts of this kind they find themselves just where they were—the same uncertainty, the same uneasiness still remains. In short, their minds are wholly taken up about something they must do to win Christ, or qualify themselves for him; and the language of the whole is, “Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead,” Rom. x. 6, 7. This is all the effect which a conviction of guilt and unworthiness can produce without faith.

But faith, as I observed before, does not stagger at God’s word on account of our own unworthiness. Whilst it has the broadest view of sin, and the deepest conviction of its evil and malignant nature, it is not discouraged; because it finds in the gospel what is more than sufficient to answer the most extensive views of guilt. It knows that he who spoke the world into existence, and delivered the fiery law, ministering death and condemnation to the guilty, is the same God who now proclaims peace and reconciliation through the atonement—that the latter is therefore as certain as the former, and much more abundant; for where sin hath abounded, grace did much more abound, Rom. v. 20. It raises indeed the believer’s wonder and admiration that ever God should shew mercy to such unworthy, polluted, and guilty wretches as he finds himself to be, for it is a marvellous light he is brought into; but this

wonder is not the wonder of doubt or diffidence, as if it were too great or too good to be true ; but it is the wonder of certainty, adoration, and joy. Faith sees there is nothing too great for omnipotence, nothing too good for infinite grace and love. It sees that the design of God is to commend his love to the highest, and to show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness to the guilty, Rom. v. 8. Eph. ii. 7. and this without any regard to their worth. Nay it sees that their very unworthiness gives occasion for the exercise of this grace, and that it could not otherwise appear in its highest lustre ; it therefore does not repine at the want of worth, but rejoices in the abundance of divine grace, to which it is content to be an eternal debtor, whilst it ascribes all the glory to God. See the spirit of this expressed by David, when he believed God's promise, 2 Sam. vii. 18—24. But we come now, in the last place, to enquire

IV. What peculiar *suitableness* there is in faith to obtain this blessing, answerable to the way in which it is held forth in the gospel. In entering upon this head it may be proper to take notice of the opinions of some others on this subject.

1. Some conceive that faith justifies as it is a *moral virtue*, and so has a moral fitness in it to be accepted. 2. Others, that it justifies not so much from any virtue in its nature as from its being the *principle* which produces holiness. 3. Some, who see no virtue in simple belief to account for justification being ascribed to it, have, to supply that defect, included in its nature the moral exercises of the *will* and *affections*, which complex view they call by the name of *faith*. 4. Others, that it justifies only as an *instrument* to receive Christ

as a free gift, but in that instrument they also include the exercise of the will and affections. It is easy to see that these views amount much to the same thing; all of them agree that men are not justified simply in believing the gospel, and so they must necessarily connect it with such moral exercises of the heart as have the nature of the internal *deeds of the law*, which the apostle excludes in this matter; and they think they have sufficiently guarded the doctrine of grace when they say that faith does not justify as the *meritorious cause*, or as a work or *legal condition*, &c. 5. Some, to avoid these things, run into an opposite extreme, and affirm, that we are justified by faith only, as *faith* is by a figure of speech put for the *object* of it. And true it is that we are justified by the blood of Christ, which is the meritorious procuring cause of justification, Rom. v. 9.; but yet it is evident beyond all dispute, that *our believing* has an important place in justification; so important that he that believeth is justifieth, and he that believeth not is condemned. Now though we should not be able to find out exactly what *place* our believing holds in justification, or what suitableness there is in it to receive that blessing more than in any other fruit of the Spirit; yet we are assured that it has its place, and therefore there must be an *exclusive suitableness* in it to the way in which God confers that blessing. Let us see if we can point out some particulars wherein the suitableness of faith appears in this matter.

1. The salvation by Jesus Christ is communicated to us by means of the revelation concerning it. But no other fruit of the Spirit is fitted to understand, credit, or receive this revelation as the word of God, but faith only. Faith alone is adapted to perceive the import and truth of what is revealed, and so has an exclusive

fitness in it to receive divine blessings by means of testimony. This office is equally peculiar to it as seeing is to the eye, or hearing to the ear, to both of which it is compared ;—"Look unto me, and be ye saved.—Hear, and your souls shall live." Without faith revelation would be a blank to us.

2. Faith is exclusively fitted to receive divine revelation *as such*, *i. e.* as the word of God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. without which it would not be divine faith, or carry a prevailing certainty in it. It alone perceives the evidence that God is the speaker, and receives his word, not because it agrees with our natural notions, or the deductions of reasoning, but because God says it, which is the highest reason, and it corresponds exactly with what he says. Thus Abraham believed God "according to that which was spoken," Rom. iv. 18. and of the Corinthians it is said, "So we preach, and so ye believed," 1 Cor. xv. 11. This also is peculiar to faith.

3. Faith alone is adapted to receive *supernatural truths*. Things that are according to the common course of nature, reason, or experience, require no divine faith to believe them ; but the great and important truths of revelation are supernatural, and as they could not be known at all unless revealed, so neither could they be believed when revealed without perceiving God to be the author of that revelation. Now here faith has an exclusive fitness : it receives supernatural truths when it has no other ground to go upon but the word of the almighty and faithful God ; nay, when every thing in nature and experience seemed to contradict. This was eminently exemplified in the faith of Abraham, who is set before us as an example of faith. He believed God's promise that he should become the father of many nations, when every thing in nature made against

it, both he and Sarah being past age; yet he took not this natural unfitness into consideration as any objection. God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were, had said it, and that was enough to him; so that “against hope he believed in hope that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken—being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform; and therefore it was counted to him for righteousness,” Rom. iv. 17—23. In like manner are we called to believe the supernatural truths of the gospel unto our justification, which is described to be a “believing on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,” ver. 24, 25. And if our faith correspond with that of Abraham’s it will surmount every consideration of our natural unfitness to be justified in the natural way of works, and believe unto righteousness. It is plain that nothing but faith is adapted to this.

4. Faith has a peculiar suitableness in it to receive justification, and every other spiritual blessing *purely of grace*. The apostle gives this reason why justification and the inheritance are of faith. “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace,” Rom. iv. 16. *i. e.* of pure free favour to the unworthy. God’s chief design in the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel is to show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 7. and that we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace, chap. i. 6, 12. and that not only in electing, predestinating, and sending his Son to redeem us, wherein we can claim no share; but also in *applying* this redemption to us, for herein we are most ready to boast, as being owing in

part at least to some comparative merit in ourselves; and therefore the apostle particularly shows that our calling is of grace, and not according to our works, 2 Tim. i. 9. and that our justification is freely by God's grace, Rom. iii. 24. for on this point the grace of God was much opposed, and is still; and it is wonderful to think what art has been employed to darken the grace of God on this head. Some in plain terms placing it upon sincere though imperfect obedience; others more covertly upon the virtuous exercise of the will and affections, and each of them admit that it is of grace. But the grace they have in view is different from what the apostle means. It is grace not to the utterly unworthy, but to such as are comparatively better disposed and qualified than others. But the grace the apostle speaks of regards no man's worth. He states it as incompatible with works either internal or external, Rom. xi. 6. and in this respect he makes faith to agree with it. He observes, that "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of *grace*," even although the work did not merit the reward. And in opposition to any supposed works whereby men seek to be justified, he says, "But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 4, 5. Here we see the person who obtains justification. 1. Gives up the natural way of seeking it; *he worketh not*, he despairs of obtaining it in that way either meritoriously or as the means of it. 2. He in opposition to working *believes* in God who raised Christ from the dead for the justification of sinners, after having delivered him for our offences. His faith then respects God's word, and the work finished by Christ as fully sufficient for his justification. 3. He believes in God, under the character of the justifier of the *ungodly*.

He therefore views no godliness in himself, of any kind or degree, on account of which he may be justified in the natural way, but every thing the reverse; yet like Abraham he overlooks all his natural unfitness to be justified as any objection and believes in God as the justifier of the ungodly freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Thus his faith has a suitableness in it to receive justification of absolute free grace, which no other fruit of the Spirit has.

I shall now conclude with a remark or two on what has been said, by way of improvement.

1. It is obvious from what has been said, that a more important question cannot engage the human mind than, "How shall man be just with God?" Job. ix. 2. How shall a polluted mortal stand with acceptance in the presence of a holy Lord God? This enquiry deeply concerns all the human race, and their immortal interests are involved in the answer to it, or in the issue to which their minds are brought with regard to it. The gospel of the grace of God indeed, furnishes a full and satisfactory answer to this question, for it affirms in the plainest and most explicit terms, that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. If righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain, for it is uniformly held forth in the holy scriptures as the immediate design, and the declared end of his death, to work out a righteousness for the justification of the ungodly, by means of his most perfect obedience unto the death in their stead: and to seek acceptance with God in any other way, is to frustrate the grace of God, Gal. ii. 21. This is the alone way of salvation for sinful men since the fall; and accordingly we find the apostle Paul illustrating it by the

example of Abraham and David, two of the most eminent servants of God, and both of whom had the promise of the Messiah to come of their seed. .

2. We may learn from the view that has been taken of this subject, to exercise a cautious jealousy over our own hearts, and also over the sentiments of others, in reference to this humbling doctrine, the doctrine of justification by grace, in which all works on the part of man are set aside as being either the cause, condition, or medium through which this blessing is enjoyed. . This way of obtaining justification runs counter to every system of religion that ever prevailed in the world, except that revealed in the gospel, and indeed to every dictate of the human heart. We cannot therefore wonder that the most subtle devices of Satan have been exerted to corrupt this doctrine in a thousand different ways. It was corrupted among the Galatian churches by the doctrine of the Judaizing teachers, that it was necessary to add circumcision and other Jewish rites to the faith of the gospel, or they could not be saved; and it is in reference to this, that the apostle tells the Galatians, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” chap. v. 9. A due conviction that we have sinned and come short of the glory of God, will cut off all our hopes of life by the law, and keep us from establishing our own righteousness, which was the great error of the Jews, Rom. x. 3. It will stop the mouth from every self-justifying plea, and lead us both to justify God and his law, while we condemn ourselves, like the publican in the parable; and it will recommend to us the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, thankfully submitting ourselves to it as every way suited to our guilty and miserable situation; in a word, it will make the Saviour precious to us, and lead us to glorify God for his mercy.

SERMON XV.

THE LIGHT OF GOD'S COUNTENANCE THE
BELIEVER'S HIGHEST JOY.



PSALM iv. 6, 7.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?
Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon
us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than
in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

THERE are few subjects on which a greater diversity of opinions exist among mankind, than on what constitutes the chief good, or in other words, wherein true happiness is to be found. They are all in quest of the object in one way or other, but since man lost his original happiness in God, their sources of pursuit have been greatly diversified.

The world in general seek after it in the enjoyment of earthly things; such as, in the words of the text, are denoted by "corn and wine"—the gifts of Providence, in riches, honours, and the pleasures of sense, which can neither profit nor satisfy an immortal soul. Hence divine wisdom thus expostulates with them:

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Isa. lv. 2. But no disappointment can teach them the vanity of these things: the cry of the many still is, “Who will shew us any good?” Wearied with the fruitless chase, and dissatisfied with all they have obtained, the cry still continues. But the reason is obvious: the good which they are so eagerly pursuing is of an *earthly* nature, for it is opposed to the light of God’s countenance, or the enjoyment of his favour, in which alone true happiness is to be found. But while men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them and the blindness of their hearts, they know nothing better, and consequently are incapable of raising their thoughts to any higher source of enjoyment.

The words of the text are full of instruction on this important subject. They are intended, and indeed are well calculated, to rectify mistakes on this head, and to direct the children of men to that which can alone make the soul happy. In order to a profitable illustration of them I shall submit what I have to say under a few distinct propositions. And,

I. I remark that there is an enjoyment of God, or a sense of the divine favour, which the people of God long for, and even obtain in this world, that far exceeds all earthly happiness, and which they greatly prefer to all other enjoyments.

This is that which the Psalmist calls the *light of God's countenance*, and which he intimates put more gladness in his heart than the men of the world possessed in their abundant possessions of corn and wine, ver. 7. This blessing is frequently adverted to in the holy scriptures, and under a variety of different names. The

Psalmist repeatedly terms it the *fatness* of God's house, as in Ps. xxxvi. 8. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasure." In another place, he calls it the *joy of God's* salvation, and prays that it may be restored to him, Ps. li. 12. The same thing is intended when he says, "My soul shall be satisfied as with *marrow and fatness*," Ps. lxiii. 5. And again in Ps. lxxv. 4. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with *the goodness* of thy house, even of thy holy temple." All these expressions are of similar import, and are used by the Psalmist to denote that same blessing which in the text he terms "the light of the divine countenance," and which he prays might be lifted up upon him: and no doubt in all of them there is a pointed allusion to what is recorded in Num. vi. 22—27. where the blessed God himself prescribes the form in which Aaron and his sons were directed to bless the children of Israel. "On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord *lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.*"

But this blessing is more abundantly bestowed under the new covenant, or gospel dispensation, by means of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; and it is that *manifestation* which Christ promised to his disciples, when he said: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and *manifest myself to him.*" And when in answer to the question of Jude "how the Lord would manifest himself

unto his disciples, and not unto the world," he adds, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,*" John xiv. 21—23. This is that *joy* which he speaks of, chap. xvi. 22. which no man taketh from them. It is his joy *fulfilled in themselves*, chap. xvii. 17.—the love wherewith the Father loved them, dwelling in them, ver. 26. or as the apostle expresses it in his epistle to the Romans, "the love of God poured into their hearts by means of the Holy Spirit which is given unto them;" and leading them to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," Rom. v. 5, 11. The same blessing is also intended when the apostle says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," chap. viii. 16.—the sealing of the Spirit unto the day of redemption, Eph. iv. 30, and the earnest, prelude, or foretaste of the heavenly inheritance. chap. i. 13, 14. The apostle John has evidently an eye to the same blessing as that which casts out tormenting fear and perfects love: "He that dwelleth in love" says he "dwelleth in God, and God in him: herein is our love made perfect—there is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love." 1 John iv. 16—18.

Now the blessing of which we are treating, the manifestation of the divine presence; this enjoyment of the favour of God or having the light of his countenance lifted up upon us, consists in having a more abundant communication of light poured into the soul, through the influence of the Spirit of truth, and by means of the word; for it is his office to take of the things of Christ, and shew them to the disciples, revealing his glorious

grace in the wondrous plan of salvation; his suitability in all the offices, and under all the characters which he sustains in the œconomy of redemption. Thus the Holy Spirit gives refreshing discoveries to the mind of the truth, the evidence, and the import of the gospel testimony, presenting the Saviour to the eye of faith, in all his fulness of grace and salvation; in all his suitability as made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; exhibiting his amiableness as the image of the invisible God, that Peerless One “the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely,”—who is fairer than the children of men, and into whose lips grace is poured; who under the disguise of poverty and meanness while he tabernacled among us, was “full of grace and truth.” This fills the soul with admiration of the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ; reveals the divine glory, as shining in his face, and fills the minds of the disciples with heavenly peace and satisfaction, on a discovery of the blessings which he hath procured for them, for time and eternity.

Moreover, this blessing includes in it an assurance of our personal *interest in Christ*. For what less than this can be imported in those numerous and strong expressions to which we have already adverted, such as, the Holy Spirit witnessing to our adoption, sealing us to the day of redemption, dwelling in us as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, and assuring us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom. viii. 38, 39. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, pours into the hearts of the people of God a sense of his love, and so gives them a delightful anticipation of the joys of heaven, a portion of that same enjoyment whereby Jesus himself is made most blessed for ever, for it is his joy fulfilled in them. Hereby their

love to God is greatly encreased, and their hope made joyful and triumphant. Then do they joy in God through whom they have received the atonement, and expatiate upon the divine perfections with unspeakable pleasure, knowing that this God is our God for ever and ever. These are indeed "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," in which we have freedom of *access* to him as our Father, yea, as the portion of our souls, and also freedom of *speech* to pour out our hearts before him, in the assurance of having our prayers heard and answered so far as is compatible with his glory, and our eternal good.

II. I remark, that even real Christians in this imperfect state, have not at all times an equal degree or portion of this sensible manifestation and enjoyment of the divine favour.

The evidence on which this proposition rests is various and multiform. The fact is demonstrable from the different degrees of it mentioned in the holy scriptures. That there are different degrees of faith and hope and love, is universally allowed; and if that be admitted, it follows as a necessary consequence, that there must also be different degrees of the correspondent enjoyment; which indeed is implied in the language adopted by the inspired writers when speaking on the subject, for we read of *joy*—of joy that is *unspeakable*—and of joy made *full*. Acts viii. 8, 39. chap. xiii. 52. 1 Pet. i. 8.

But the fact is further manifest from the very different state of mind in which we find the same persons at different times. Take the Psalmist for an instance: sometimes we find him rejoicing in the light of God's countenance; at other times he is greatly discouraged, and complains of the hiding of God's face. Now his

language is, "The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid?" Ps. xxvii. 1. Anon it is, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction ; for our soul is bowed down to the dust," Ps. xlv. 24, 25. See also Ps. li. 12.

It may also be inferred from the circumstance of its being set before us as an encouragement to duty, which it certainly is by Christ himself, when he promises this manifestation to such as have his commandments and keep them, John xiv. 21, 23. To the same effect is the language of the prophet, Isa. lxiv. 5. "Thou meetest with joy those who work righteousness ; who in thy ways remember thee." (*Lowth.*) This privilege is also held forth as attainable in the way of seeking the Lord ; for the Psalmist says, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth," Ps. cxlv. 18. which corresponds with the language of the apostle James, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you," chap. iv. 8. Paul also adduces it as a support under sufferings for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. i. 5.

We might further consider, on this subject, the prayers of the people of God for its increase. Thus the Psalmist: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people : O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance," Ps. cvi. 4, 5. To the same effect is the prayer of the apostle: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit," Rom. xv. 13. So the same apostle prays for the believing Ephesians "that the God of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Eph. i. 17, 18. and again in chap. iii. 14—19. he says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God."

Let me further observe on this subject, that this enjoyment will be suspended, or greatly affected, by various things that may occur to the Christian in his spiritual warfare, of which I shall instance a few. I remark then, that a believer's joy in the Lord, or sensible enjoyment of the divine favour, must be greatly affected by *unbelief*, or a perversion of the faith of the gospel. This was evidently the case with the Galatians. While they stood fast in the true grace of God, their happiness and joy in the truth was unbounded; but when they were brought under the influence of a perverted gospel, chap. i. 7. the apostle had to address them in such language as this; "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" chap. iv. 15. and tells them that "he travailed in birth again until Christ was formed in them," ver. 19. This happy state of mind must also of necessity be greatly affected by a course of *disobedience* to the divine will, or an untender walk. It was

evidently so with David when he fell into the sin of adultery and murder ; for though, on his contrition and repentance, the prophet Nathan assured him that the Lord had put away his sin, 2 Sam. xii. 13. we find him under the pressure of mental darkness, thus venting the breathings of his soul, “ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me : cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me ; *restore unto me the joy* of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free Spirit,” Ps. li. 10—12. “ O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise,” ver. 15. Upon the same principle the apostle warns the Ephesians “ not to grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby they were sealed unto the day of redemption ; but to put away from them all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice ; and to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake had forgiven them,” Eph. iv. 30. But indeed the apostle John has fully established this point, when he says, “ If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth : but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” 1 John i. 6, 7.—An undue attachment to this world, or having our affections set upon it, also is wholly incompatible with the enjoyment of the divine favour as our chief happiness. We cannot serve God and mammon, Matt. vi. 24. “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” 1 John ii. 15. Another thing which I may mention as intimately connected with this subject, and as tending greatly to mar our enjoyment of this blessing is *remissness* and *luke-warmness* in the means of corresponding

with God. This is strikingly evinced in the case of the Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 15, 16. Forgetting their native misery and wretchedness, they fancied themselves rich and encreased in goods, and so to have need of nothing: and this unhappy conceit barred the door of their hearts against the Saviour's admission into it, and deprived them of those spiritual refreshments, and that sweet communion with himself by the consolations of the Holy Spirit, which is denoted by his coming in and supping with them.—And let me also add, that the indulgence of a *self-righteous* spirit is incompatible with the enjoyment of this blessing. The high and lofty one does not dwell in the high and lofty heart, but “with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones,” Is. lvii. 15. Indeed, none but such are, in the very nature of the thing, capable of receiving this spiritual consolation. A worldly spirit cannot receive it because it is not the object of its desire: neither can a self-righteous spirit receive it, for the Lord taketh pleasure in them alone that hope in his mercy—he resisteth the proud, but sheweth favour to the lowly, 1 Pet. v. 5.

III. Let it be remarked, that when this enjoyment of the divine favour is interrupted, the children of God sensibly feel the loss, and earnestly thirst after a renewal of it.

We have a striking instance of this in the case of David: As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before thee?” Ps. xlii. 1, 2. On another occasion he says, “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a

dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," Ps. lxiii, 1, 2. "My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh crieth out for the living God," Ps. xciv. 2. We must not imagine that it was merely the glory and splendour of the temple, or the external magnificence of its worship, that rendered the courts of the Lord's house so estimable in the eyes of the Psalmist; it was because he had there been accustomed to enjoy the divine presence in attending upon his ordinances, but of which he was now deprived. Such as have tasted that the Lord is gracious, will earnestly desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 3. For "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," Matt. v. 6. The Lord filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away, Luke i. 53. I add,

IV. That the earnest desires which God excites by his Spirit in the souls of his people, can be satisfied with nothing short of God himself.

Such, it is plain, was the case with the Psalmist; he longed for the light of the divine countenance, the richest communications of his favour—yea, his soul thirsted for God, for the living God, Ps. xlii. 2. It is a delightful consideration that the blessed God hath revealed himself as the portion of his people: not only has he held forth his benefits, but in the œconomy of redemption he exhibits *himself* as the object of their happiness, that their desires and affections might center immediately in him. Hence they are called upon to "delight themselves in the Lord, and he shall give them the desires of their heart," Ps. xxxvii, 4. Accordingly the scriptures represent his children as claiming an interest in

him as their portion and satisfying good, while he claims his redeemed people as his special property, his purchased possession, and peculiar treasure; they, on the other hand claim him as their portion and their God: "I will say to them who were not my people, Thou art my people: and they shall say, Thou art my God." And again, "I will say it is my people, and they shall say the Lord is my God," Hos. ii. 23. Zech. xiii. 9. This language of the saints is both exemplified and predicted in many parts of the Old Testament. Thus Lam. iii. 24. —"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." And again,—"Thou art my portion, O Lord," Ps. cxix. 57. "I said, thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living," Ps. cxlii. 5. "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Ps. lxxiii. 26. Thus we see how the people of God claim an interest in him as their portion, and that as such he is the object of their supreme desire, affection and happiness. But no worldly enjoyments can satisfy the longing desires of the mind of a believer under the want of this blessedness. Not even the ordinances of the house of God themselves can compensate its loss, or make up for the absence of the favour and enjoyment of the living God. Mere nominal professors can rest in the outward form; indeed they have no delight in God himself. Their devotion is a drudgery, perhaps springing from a principle of self-righteousness; but believers look upon ordinances more in the light of privilege than of duty, for they regard them as the instituted means of their corresponding with God their chief joy, Ps. xliii. 4.

V. Those who thirst after the living God will seek him in the ordinances of his appointment.

The Psalmist in thirsting after God always manifests

the delight he had in the house, the tabernacle, and the courts of his God. It was in God's temple that he enquired—that he saw his glory—and thought of his lovingkindness. “One thing have I desired of the Lord,” says he, “and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple,” Ps. xxvii. 4. “In his temple doth every one speak of his glory,” Ps. xxix. 9. “We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple,” Ps. xlviii. 9. There he approached his altar—sought his face—learnt his testimonies—and sang his praise. “I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy,” Ps. xliii. 4. “I will come into thy house, in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple,” Ps. v. 7. And so he calls this enjoyment the *fatness* or *goodness* of God's house: “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures,” Ps. xxxvi. 8. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple,” Ps. lxxv. 4. It was there that he had seen his power and glory, and expected to see his beauty: “My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see thy power and glory as I have seen thee in the sanctuary,” Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2. and xxvii. 4. To neglect the means which he hath appointed for his people to seek him, and in which he hath promised to be found of them, is not only to disregard his authority, but to despise his love. Which leads me further to observe,

VI. That we have no ground to expect the presence of God in his ordinances if we seek him not *with our whole heart*.

The Lord complains of his ancient people Israel, "This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and with their lips they do honour me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men," Isa. xxix. 13. "By night on my bed," says the spouse in the Canticles, "I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found him not," chap. iii. 1. a posture very significant and descriptive of the sluggard. But she proceeds thus: "I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth," ver. 2. How does the Lord blame the church of Laodicea for their lukewarmness: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth," Rev. iii. 15, 16. Thus the Saviour speaks to them, as the bridegroom of his church, in the jealousy of affection: he had done much to gain their hearts, and deserved their warmest affections in return; yes, he merited to have the supremacy in their soul; but instead of this he found nothing in return but a careless, listless indifference, altogether unsuitable to his worth, to the fervency of his affection towards them, and to the obligations he had laid them under in redeeming them and calling them by his grace. No wonder that he complains of this state of mind as nauseous to him, and that he would rather that they were altogether cold. It was such a degree of lukewarmness as in a great measure shut him out of their hearts. How different was the case with the Psalmist; his soul thirsted for God, and he sought him with his

whole heart, Ps. cxix. 10.; he pronounces those blessed who do so, ver. 2. and shews their happy success, when he says, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth: he will fulfill the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry and will save them," Ps. cxlv. 18, 19. The joys of God's salvation do not drop into the mouth of the yawning sluggard, nor can they be relished or enjoyed in such a state of mind. I only add one thing more, which is,

VII. That there is no ground to expect fellowship with God, or the enjoyment of him in his ordinances, unless our conversation in general be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, 1 John i. 6.

The Lord thus complained of his ancient people Israel: "They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God," Isa. lviii. 2. but the Lord reproves them for their hypocrisy: he tells them they fasted for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness, ver. 4. They multiplied their sacrifices, yet with all their external observances, they regarded iniquity in their hearts. Hence we find the Lord addressing them as follows: "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth? Seeing that thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers: thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit: thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, thou slanderest thine own mother's son: these things hast thou done,

and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God," Ps. l. 16—23. Similar to this, is his remonstrance with them by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats: when ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, I cannot away with; even the solemn meeting is iniquity; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them; and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your lands are full of blood," Isa. i. 11—15. Our Lord's language to the Pharisees of his day is much to the same effect, Matt. xxiii. 14. &c. and indeed the whole doctrine of the law and the prophets, of Christ and his apostles, uniformly attest the same truth, that we can have no fellowship with a holy God, but by imitating him in his holiness, purity and love, as these are displayed in the gospel, 1 John i. 6. for he requireth truth in the inward parts, and calls his people to "be holy as he is holy," 1 Pet. i. 16. to "perfect holiness in his fear," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

Thus I have shewn that the saints have an enjoyment of God in this world, which constitutes their highest

felicity—but that they do not possess at all times an equal degree of it—that when it is interrupted or suspended they feel the loss, and earnestly long for the renewal of it—that nothing less than God himself can satisfy this desire—that such will seek him in his ordinances—and that with their whole heart—and by a corresponding walk. Let us now improve the subject by a personal application.

1. Let each individual ask himself: “Have I ever experienced this divine enjoyment?” Many persons do not believe there is any such privilege to be partaken of; on the contrary, they look upon every pretension to it in the light of *enthusiasm*, or as the essence of *fanaticism*. Others there are who admit it in speculation, but confine it to the first Christians, as a necessary solace under the persecutions and sufferings which they endured for the gospel's sake; or they consider it as rarely attainable, not at all essential to a Christian, and so content themselves without it. But let us not be deceived in this important matter. For,

(1.) The word of God represents this enjoyment as a privilege common to all the saints. Those who are justified by faith have *peace* with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the hope of his glory.—They have also the *love* of God poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto them; and they *joy* in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have received the atonement, Rom. v. 1, 2, 5, 11. Those who believe the resurrection of Christ from the dead, are begotten to a *lively hope* of the inheritance, and have *joy unspeakable*, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. All the sons of God by faith, have the spirit of *adoption*, Gal. iv. 6. and are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of

the inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14. Without this we must necessarily be in an uncertainty as to our state; and can we be easy in such a situation? Especially when we consider,

(2.) That the scriptures attribute the withholding of the comforting influences of the Spirit to our sins. It was this that deprived David of the joys of God's salvation, and made him to cry unto the Lord that they might be restored to him, Ps. li. 12. And are we not taught the same doctrine in Christ's promise to his disciples, for it is evident that he connects the manifestation of his love with the keeping of his commands, John xiv. 21, 23. The Galatians, who had received a perverted gospel, lost this enjoyment by departing from the doctrine of the true grace of God, Gal. iv. 15. We have seen that a conversation unbecoming the gospel grieves the Holy Spirit, whereby the children of God are sealed to the day of redemption, Eph. iv. 30. In short, the apostle John declares that while we walk in darkness, that is, in sin, we can have no fellowship with a holy God, consequently cannot enjoy a sense of his favour, 1 John i. 6, 7.

(3.) The nature of this enjoyment clearly shews that sin is the only thing that deprives us of it. The gospel contains a foundation of everlasting consolation and of good hope through grace: why then do we not always rejoice in it? Is it not owing to the darkness of our minds—the want or weakness of our faith—the little relish or esteem which we have for it—or our preferring other things to it? And are not these the chief ingredients of alienation from God? Were our views of the gospel clear and comprehensive; were we strong in the faith, and did we prefer Christ and his salvation to every thing else, we could not fail to have a degree of this enjoyment proportioned to our knowledge, faith,

and love, by which we receive and relish it; for it is the necessary effect of knowing, believing, and loving the gospel.

We must not, therefore, attribute the want of this enjoyment, as many in our day are inclined to do, purely to God's sovereign pleasure; for he has promised it to his children, and connected it, in the nature of the thing, with their believing, loving, and obeying him. Nor must we ascribe the want of this enjoyment to some sinless natural stupor of our bodily frame, or animal spirits, by which we are rendered incapable of strong and lively impressions and affections; for though this may sometimes be the case, yet, if we are susceptible of lively joy or grief from worldly things, our want of divine enjoyments must not be attributed to a bodily cause. Even in the decay of animal nature, the saints are represented as lively in divine things. The Psalmist could say "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever," Ps. lxxiii. 26. "Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright," Ps. xcii. 13—15. Agreeable to which the apostle says that as the outward man perishes, the inward is renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 16. Let us then lay aside these and all similar evasions, and come directly to the point. Let each individual seriously ask himself, Have I *fellowship* with God—have I *peace* with him—have I *joy* in him—do I partake of the Spirit of *adoption*—have I *access* to God as a dutiful child has to his loving father—do I possess the *earnest* of the inheritance—and am I *joyful* in the hope of Christ's appearing? Such an enquiry may possibly open

up a source of conviction and humiliation to many flaming professors: it is very possible for persons to profess the faith, and be added to churches, where they may learn to talk about these things while they are wholly destitute of the enjoyment of them.

But I hasten to a conclusion: Some of us may probably in a great measure have lost our former enjoyment. If so, it is surely important to search and ascertain the cause of it. You have, perhaps, increased in speculative knowledge, but declined in faith, and love, and spiritual mindedness, and humility. This indeed will sufficiently account for it; and if such be the case, remember from whence you are fallen, and repent, and return to your first love. It may be that you are disentangled from the authority, doctrines, and commandments of men, but perhaps you are not so much under the authority of Christ, or disposed to tremble at his word. From superstition to infidelity, and from implicit faith to scepticism, the transition is easy. You may have laid aside the formal self-righteous strictness of the Pharisee, but perhaps you have relaxed in the standard of gospel holiness; and are also declining in the spirit of devotion, whereby your intercourse with God is marred. In short, it is very possible that under the pretext of asserting your Christian liberty, you may be making light of some of the plain commands and institutions of the Saviour, a state altogether incompatible with the enjoyment of his love. Let us, therefore, search and try our ways, and bring them to the light, that it may be manifest that our works are wrought in God—that they are such as he approves. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST THE CENTRE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORYING.

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GAL. vi. 14.

*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

THE power of the gospel under the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, and its peculiar suitableness for counteracting the natural obstinacy of the human heart, overcoming its prejudices, reconciling the sinner to God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, is a strong argument for its divine origin. Of the fact itself, we have many striking proofs in the history of the Acts of the Apostles; but, perhaps, none of them set the subject in so forcible a light, as the case of the great apostle of the Gentiles. He is first introduced to our notice as the pupil of Gamaliel, well versed in Jewish literature, in which he was instructed according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and by no means deficient in his zeal for God and the peculiarities of Judaism. We have an

instance of his activity in this last respect in his consenting to the martyrdom of Stephen, and holding the clothes of those who stoned him. Soon after this we find him on the way to Damascus, full of rage against the disciples of Jesus, and armed with authority from the chief priests to bind all that called upon his name, when "it pleased God to reveal his Son in him," and from that time he became as zealous in preaching the faith which hitherto he had sought to destroy, as he formerly had been in opposing it. The effect which the knowledge of Christ crucified had upon him, and the revolution which it made in his sentiments, and in all the springs of his life, has been compared to one of the greatest phenomena in nature—to the course of a mighty torrent changed from east to west by the shock of an earthquake.

In the words of the text, the apostle is contrasting his own conduct with that of the Judaizing teachers, whose object was to make a fair show in the flesh; that is, they appeared zealous for the peculiarities of the law of Moses, in order that they might avoid persecution; and they constrained the Galatians to be circumcised, that they might glory in their flesh, or boast of the number of their proselytes to Judaism, and thus keep measures with and maintain their credit among their unbelieving countrymen the Jews. Hence the apostle tells those to whom he wrote, "As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ: for neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh," ver. 12, 13. But Paul himself rejects this conduct with the utmost abhorrence, saying, in the

words of my text, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

By the *cross* of Christ in this text, some persons understand the apostle to have reference to the afflictions and *persecutions which he endured for the sake of Christ*: as, for instance, when he says, "most gladly therefore will I glory in my (*ασθενειαις*) weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. And taken in this sense, it is opposed to the conduct of those corrupt Jewish teachers, who temporised or conformed to avoid persecution, ver. 12.

But by the cross of Christ here, I rather understand the apostle to mean *Christ's sufferings for us*, which are called his cross, because he finished them when nailed to a frame of wood of that name. And that the words are to be taken in this sense must be evident, when we consider that the apostle does not oppose his *glorying in the cross* immediately to the conduct of these Judaizing teachers in *avoiding persecution*, but to their *glorying in the flesh*, or in circumcision, and the keeping of the law of Moses as necessary to salvation, ver. 13; but he could never glory in his own sufferings in that respect. Besides, he here makes a distinction betwixt *the cross of Christ* and the *persecutions* which men endure on account of it, when he says that the Judaizers constrained them to be circumcised, "only lest they should suffer *persecution* for the *cross* of Christ," ver. 12. Indeed these two views are no way incompatible but imply one another: for how could the apostle glory in suffering for the doctrine of the cross of Christ, without glorying in that for which he suffered? It was his glorying in the death of Christ upon



the cross, that made him rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts v. 41. From all this it manifestly follows that the death of Christ was the ground of the apostles glorifying.

The term *glorifying* (καυχῆμα) implies, 1. The *highest esteem* of its object, so as to despise every thing else in comparison of it. Agreeable to which we find the apostle upon another occasion, saying, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 8.—2. The term implies the highest *confidence* and trust in it, and so the original word is sometimes rendered *boasting*, as when the apostle asks, "Where is *boasting then?*" Rom. iii. 27. And hence it appears that "he that glorieth should glory only in the Lord," and in the work he hath finished, 1 Cor. i. 29—31. But, 3. the term glorifying also implies, a knowledge of *interest* in the object, for it rarely happens that men glory in that, in which they have no concern, however much they may esteem it. The prophet Isaiah gives us a fine illustration of what is imported in glorifying in the Lord, in the following passages, and they clearly express this sense of interest: "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."—"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Isa. xlv. 24, 25. So the apostle Paul gloried in the Lord, when he counted all his own righteousness and Jewish privileges as loss and dung for the knowledge of Christ Jesus *his* Lord, and to be found in him," Phil. iii, 7—10. having the knowledge that Christ loved him and gave himself for him, Gal. ii. 20.

But here a very important consideration presents itself to us, namely, "What ground of glorifying could the apostle find in the cross of Christ?" Had he gloried

in the exaltation, the honour, and the dignity of his Master, every one could have seen the wisdom and the propriety of his conduct; but to glory in his cross certainly appears at first sight amazingly strange! The cross was an instrument of the most excruciating, *painful* and cruel death. It was a manner of death allotted among the Romans to the meanest and most atrocious criminals—no free citizen of Rome, how atrocious soever his guilt, however mean his station, though the lowest mechanic, or the poorest peasant, could be subjected to it. If a man were not a slave as well as a criminal, it was not in the power of any magistrate to dishonour him so far as to consign him to so insignificant a punishment. The cross therefore carried in it every mark of disgrace, of *shame* and infamy as well as guilt. It was a manner of death which had an execration or curse annexed to it by the law of Moses; for thus ran its tenor, “He that is hanged is accursed of God,” Deut. xxi. 23. which our apostle quotes in a preceding part of his epistle, Gal. iii. 13. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us: *for it is written*, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Besides, was not the doctrine of Christ crucified a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the wise Greeks foolishness? The apostle allowed all this to be true; but in that very respect in which his divine Master was subjected to shame, disgrace and the curse, the apostle gloried in him! Those very circumstances which rendered him odious and scandalous in the eyes of the men of the world, attracted the apostle’s highest esteem. That which appeared to them as only weakness and foolishness, was to him the power of God and the wisdom of God, the foundation of all his hope and trust. That which made others disown and reject him, and so ashamed of having any connection

with him, rendered him glorious and honourable in the apostle's eyes; so that he esteemed a connection with him his highest dignity as well as his interest. As if he should say—"I glory, exult and boast in that which the world counts the highest disgrace; and whatever men may say or think of it, I am determined to know nothing as my wisdom, and to glory in nothing else as the ground of my hope before God, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him crucified."

Here the wise philosopher with a mixture of pity and sovereign contempt would look upon the apostle as a delirious fanatic, unworthy of his notice or regard; whilst the self-righteous Pharisee, burning with fiery zeal would willingly stone him to death as a despiser of the law of Moses! After all are we to think that Paul was destitute of the "common feelings of mankind? or that contrary to the fundamental principles of our nature he loved pain and distress, and gloried in ignominy and disgrace merely for their own sakes? By no means. On the contrary he found in the cross of Christ, the most rational, the most exalted ground of glorying. For,

1. He saw *the infinite dignity and worth of the sufferer*, under all the disguise of poverty, disgrace and distress which he underwent. He knew him to be the true God, the Lord of Glory, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth though covered with ignominy and mal-treated by mortals—he knew that he was the judge of all, though arraigned at a human tribunal—that he was the fountain of all riches and fulness, though now become poor. He knew him to be the Lord of life, though subjected to death—the Holy one and the Just, though impeached with guilt and punished as a malefactor! So that in this amazing contrast, the infinite greatness of

divine love and condescension shone forth to his view in all their glory.

2. The apostle saw the *end* and *design* of the cross of Christ, namely, The glory of God and the salvation of the guilty—which are the highest and most noble of all ends.

First—The apostle saw in the death of Christ all the divine perfections most gloriously magnified and displayed. In the cross there is a *clearer* display of the character of God than is to be found in all the works of creation and providence: for here his wisdom, power and goodness shine forth to higher advantage. There is a *fuller* display of his truth, justice, holiness, love, mercy, and grace. There is a more *consistent* and *harmonious* display of justice with mercy, of righteousness with peace—a more *comfortable* display, inasmuch as herein all the divine perfections are viewed as co-operating for our good. So that in glorying in the cross of Christ, the apostle gloried in the character of the true God shining in the face of Christ crucified, 2 Cor. iv. 6. as the just God and the Saviour, Isa. xlv. 21. as delighting to exercise lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth, Jer. ix. 24. Now in order to illustrate this subject a little, I shall instance in some of the divine perfections, and shew how they are glorified in the cross of Christ.

1. In the crucifixion of the Saviour, the glory of infinite justice shines with peculiar lustre. God is the rightful Sovereign and Governor of the universe. He governs his rational creatures by a law suited to the nature he hath given them. To dispense with this law, and suffer sin and rebellion with impunity, would not only throw the divine government into anarchy and disorder, but would reflect dishonour upon the character



of the Lawgiver, and leave it uncertain whether good or evil, right or wrong were the most agreeable to him. It was therefore necessary that his justice should be manifested to the utmost: and this hath been done in the cross of Christ, more than in all the torments of devils, or the destruction of the whole world, by punishing sin to the utmost in the object of his highest love when he stood in the room of the guilty.

2. In the cross of Christ the infinite *holiness* of God is gloriously manifested and shines forth. His hatred of, and opposition to all manner of sin was indeed manifested in casting down legions of angels from their seats of bliss into eternal misery, in banishing Adam from Paradise, in destroying the old world with a flood of waters, and it will be still more manifested in the everlasting destruction of the ungodly and impenitent. But in no instance does the Lord appear so glorious in holiness, so infinite in his opposition to sin, as when he takes vengeance on the darling of his soul who knew no sin, and smites the man that is his fellow. Here he strikes at sin as it were through his own bowels!

3. In the cross of Christ the glory of his infinite *mercy* is displayed. The apostle, on another occasion, teaches us that the grand design of God in the work of man's redemption was "that he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 7. But by what expression could the exceeding riches of his grace and mercy be fully shewn to us? Had he given ten thousand worlds for our ransom, this would have been great mercy and grace, but not *infinite*. But in giving his Son to the death of the cross for us, he hath given an adequate expression of his infinite mercy and grace, because his beloved Son is a gift of infinite *dignity* and *worth*, and because he is infinitely *dear* to him. He

might have created millions of worlds, but he had but one only Son, and he spared him not. In this gift he commends his love towards us more than by all the spiritual blessings given along with him, Rom. v. 10. chap. viii. 32. If to this consideration we add that of the guilt and wretchedness of those for whom he was delivered up to death, we must acknowledge that the cross of Christ displays infinite mercy.

4. In the astonishing transactions of calvary we may also see the glory of infinite *wisdom*. Wisdom consists in contriving the fittest means for promoting the best ends. Now the glory of God and the good of man are the highest, and they are the best ends, that are possible; and the means by which these are advanced are so fit and suitable, that the infinite depth of contrivance and wisdom in them will be the admiration of angels and men to all eternity. To reconcile the joint exercise of justice and mercy—to shew his infinite opposition to sin, and at the same time his infinite love to the sinner—to punish guilt to the utmost, and yet pardon the guilty fully and freely; nay, to magnify and declare his justice in the remission of sins, and enhance his mercy to the utmost in the way of punishing them: this was a scheme which nothing but infinite wisdom could devise, and the display of it is only to be seen in the cross of Christ.

Secondly, In the cross of Christ the apostle saw *the salvation of the guilty most effectually secured*. He knew that Christ endured the cross and despised the shame to redeem his people from the curse of the divine law, and save them from their sins; and he was persuaded that it was fully adequate to, and effectual for that end. The Jews gloried in the *flesh*, and in the carnal privileges of the fleshly birth; these the apostle counted but loss and dung when brought into

competition with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Philip. iii. 4, 8. They gloried in the *law*, and in their *own* righteousness in conformity to the letter of it; he gloried in Christ crucified as the *end of that law* for righteousness. They gloried in their sacrifices which could never take away sin; he gloried in the cross of Christ as the true sacrifice which for ever takes away sin, expiates its guilt, purifies the conscience, and subdues its power. By the cross of Christ, the apostle found *pardon* of the deepest guilt, Acts xiii. 38, 39. and *acceptance* into the highest favour, Eph. i. 6. the *adoption* of children, Gal. iv. 5. the *gift of the Spirit* of truth, of sonship, of holiness, and of consolation, Rom. viii. 9, 15, 16. 1 Cor. ii. 12. Eph. i. 13. He found also victory over *sin*, the *world*, the *devil*, yea, over *death* itself, Col. ii. 13—16. Heb. ii. 14, 15. 1 John v. 4. and to crown the whole he found *eternal glory*, Heb. ii. 10. 1 Pet. i. 4. What then are all the things in which men usually glory in compared with these! Mankind in general glory in their own wisdom, their riches, their own righteousness, or their strength; but Paul gloried in Christ crucified as made of God unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

LASTLY—The apostle shews us what *effects* a believing view of the cross of Christ had upon him, when he adds, “By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

The cross of Christ, or rather, Christ crucified believed in, and dwelling in my heart by faith, crucifies the world unto me. The honours, the esteem, the ease, the riches and pleasures of the world are as things crucified or dead to me—things in which I have no pleasure, enjoyment, or delight. As if he should say—“I can no longer find pleasure in its *sinful enjoyments*; on the

contrary, I hate them with a perfect hatred, when I view what my Lord endured on the cross to expiate the guilt of my sins. Shall I seek honour and esteem by what procured him shame and disgrace ; or shall I seek ease and pleasure from what cost him the most excruciating pain and distress ? Far be it ! Even the *lawful enjoyments* of this world, give me little concern, and afford me but little happiness ; my affections are moderated towards them, and I am ever ready to part with all for Christ, yea, to lay down my life for him who endured the cross for me."

But the apostle does not stop here, for he adds, "*And I am crucified unto the world:*" in other words, "I am despised, hated, persecuted, and cast off by the men of the world for my adherence to a crucified Redeemer, and for holding forth his cross, in my preaching, as the only foundation of hope to the guilty children of men, in opposition to every other claim for acceptance with God ; and I bear in my body the marks and scars of my sufferings for the name of the Lord Jesus, and for preaching the doctrine of his precious cross. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God," Acts xx. 24.

Such were the effects which a believing apprehension of the cross of Christ produced upon the apostle Paul. Let us now enquire what use we ought to make of the subject. And

1. Is the person who endured the cross, a person of such infinite dignity and worth ? Then certainly his sacrifice must be every way effectual to answer all the ends for which it was offered : it must be effectual to satisfy divine justice, to magnify the law, to procure a full and everlasting remission of sins however numerous



and however heinous. When therefore we think of the infinite justice and holiness of God, and of the number and magnitude of our own sins; let us also consider that it is CHRIST that died, Rom. viii. 34. Though the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins; yet the divine blood of the Son of God has fully and for ever done it, Acts xx. 28. Heb. x. 14.

2. Is the person who endured the cross, the only and well beloved Son of God, whom the Father esteemed and delighted in above all things? Then, what assurance does this give us of God's love, and of our obtaining all spiritual blessings in and with him. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things," Rom. viii. 32. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life," chap. v. 10. If he has given the greatest and the most precious of his gifts, he surely cannot withhold the lesser. The cross of Christ assures us, and indeed, is the highest pledge of every thing else that is conducive to our eternal happiness.

3. Let us be induced by the powerful motives of the death of Christ, to lay aside every other ground of glorying, except the cross of the Lord Jesus, such as our own wisdom, riches, righteousness or strength. This we see the apostle does with abhorrence. "Far be it, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And in this he was obeying the voice of the Most High, who thus addresses the children of men: "Thus saith the LORD: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and

knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord," Jer. ix, 23, 24. It is in the cross of Christ, that we behold him illustriously displaying every perfection of his nature, in promoting his own glory and the happiness of his people, yet at the same time, pouring contempt upon all human glory, overturning every ground of human boasting—every thing which men esteem great, powerful, wise, and honourable, upon which they are disposed to value themselves, or glory over others. It was a realizing perception of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which led the apostle to say—"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him," Phil. iii. 7—9.

4. Let us imitate the conduct of the apostle in making the cross of Christ our *only ground of glorying*. The divine Father both glories in it, and is glorified by it. He has made all his works of creation and providence subservient to it. It is the admiration of angels—the terror of devils—It was the hope of the Old Testament saints—the glory of the New Testament believers—and it will be the everlasting song of the redeemed in glory. Let us glory in it, as the foundation of our *own* particular hope, that our souls may be comforted, our love kindled, and our hearts enlarged to run the race set before us.

5. Believers should improve this subject, in the way of self-examination. Let us see that we walk worthy of the hopes which it affords, and the motives which it administers. "Ye know that ye were not redeemed

with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, than your faith and hope might be in God." 1 Pet. i. 18—21. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought into you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation—passing the time of your sojourning here in fear." ver. 13—17. The apostle could say, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, to change the bodies of our humiliation, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. iii. 20, 21. The doctrine of the cross opened up a new world to the apostle; it opened heaven to him—it gave him peace with God, access with boldness into the holiest of all, and led him to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. His supreme affection, his aims and pursuits were withdrawn from earthly things, and directed to things above. He eagerly desired conformity to Christ in his death, and to know him in the fellowship of his sufferings, mortifying him to sin, and working patience and hope in him, that by this and every other means that God has appointed, he might attain the blessed resurrection of the dead. In this view he says, "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—while we aim not at (or pursue as our scope) the things which are seen, but the things

that are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2. Cor. iv. 17, 18. Thus as one dead to the world and risen with Christ, he sought the things which are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and so had his conversation in heaven.

(6.) Let us manifest that we glory in the cross of Christ, by keeping his commandments and living unto him that died for us. This is only the native effects of his death, and what his love in laying down his own life for us should constrain us to. "He died," says the apostle, "that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto him that died for them and rose again," 2. Cor. v. 14, 15. By his death he hath obtained a rightful propriety in his people—an exclusive right to their obedience; they are his purchased possession and consequently not their own. His sovereignty over them is absolute; he is their Lord, their head, and the husband of his church, and with the motives before mentioned, should influence them to live to his praise. "For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;" the consequence is, that "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord's, Rom. xiv. 7—9. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Ps. xlv. 11.

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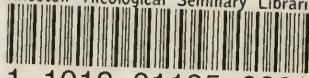


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